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“My heart crieth out for God, yea, for the living God.”

*Old Testament Psalm.*

“Unlovely, nay, almost frightful, is the solitude of the soul  
which is without God in the world.”

*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

“O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our Eternal home!”

*Isaac Watts.*



# BECAUSE MEN ARE NOT STONES

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## FOREWORD

Does God know? Does God care?

Are not these the profoundest questions, and the most vital, that man can ask? Are they, or are they not, also, the most tragic? Unless we are living utterly thoughtless and shallow lives, we all ask them. We all *must, because we are men, and not stones.* Unless they can be answered affirmatively, does not the universe become soulless, purposeless, idiotic, an infinite accident, possessing somehow force and motion, but blind, deaf, dead, and without significance? And is mankind anything more than a chance and momentary bubble on a shoreless sea that rolls on remorselessly swallowing up everything?

But if these supreme questions of man's thought can be answered in the affirmative, then at once the universe has a Soul, and becomes radiant from atom to sun, not only with infinite splendor, but with infinite purpose; and man's life at once takes on infinite meanings and infinite worth. In an age of reason and science and modern knowledge, can an affirmative answer be found?

The author of this book believes it can. The following pages have been written with the hope of doing a little to bring into view such an answer, modest, simple, undogmatic, not theological as the word is generally understood, but religious, and wholly practical; based on man's reason, but, more than that, based also on his entire moral and spiritual nature—pre-eminently the answer of *man's deep heart, of God in man's soul*—and in so far as it is that, surely the *eternal answer and the true.*

J. T. S.



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I

THE SOUL'S CRY FOR GOD

“It is more than twenty-five years since Frderic Harrison, the high priest of Positivism, asserted more eloquently than any Christian preacher of his generation had done, our human nature’s need of God. Harrison called before him Job, David, Solomon, and the prophets; Paul, Augustine, Gregory, and Bernard; à Kempis, Bunyan, Taylor, and Wesley; with countless witnesses, Jewish, Christian, Mohammedan, Confucian, Buddhist, Protestant, Catholic, and Deist; and all, he asserted, however they differed from each other in the expression of their thought, were one in the substance of it. From all souls welled a single emotion: ‘*My heart and my flesh cry out for God, yea for the living God.*’ ‘It would be idle,’ said Frederic Harrison, ‘to attempt to repeat in the feeble tones of a far-away echo the arguments, the appeals, the yearning cry of these and of millions of others for thousands of years’ — all declaring our need of God. ‘*And not a word of all this,*’ said the Positivist, ‘*has ever been challenged.*’ *Not a word of all this can ever be challenged.*”

*Frederick Lynch.*

“Thou madest us for thyself,  
O God, and our heart is restless  
Until it finds repose in thee.”

*Saint Augustine.*

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## I

### THE SOUL'S CRY FOR GOD

No demand of the human soul is more deep, more pathetic, more inextinguishable, than its cry for God.

This cry began seemingly with man's creation on the earth; certainly it has accompanied all his earthly history, so far as we can trace that history; nor does there appear to be any reason for supposing that it will ever cease so long as he remains in this world. This cry of the soul for God is what all the altars and temples and religions of the world mean; it is what its philosophies really mean; it is the deepest impulse of its poetry and art and music; I am not sure but it will sometime be seen that it is the real meaning of its science.

As a babe feels out instinctively for its mother's breast, and cannot be happy or still until it finds it; as the caged eagle is restless inside its bars and can be satisfied only when it feels its wings beating the free air; as the human eye pines for light, the human mind for truth, and the human heart for love, so the human soul, in its weakness, ignorance and imperfection, is restless — must be — its very weakness cries out for a Strength higher than itself; its very ignorance cries out for a Wisdom higher than its own; its very imperfection cries out

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for Perfection; and not until these are found, as they can only be found in God, does it seem possible, in the nature of the case, that man, created as he is, can rest or find peace.

\* \* \* \*

I say I think that this is not only what man's temples and altars and religion mean, but really what his philosophies and poetry and art, and even his very science, will more and more be seen to mean at bottom as we learn to understand them better.

Man's reason is so made that it cries out for an answering Reason in Nature — an Intelligence over all things, through all things, in all things, the explanation of all things. Nothing is more abhorrent to man's mind than the thought of an idiot universe — a world without intelligence or meaning. But for man's reason to demand intelligence and meaning in the universe is, in its own way and language, to cry out for God — for what is God but the Infinite Reason?

The mind of man is so constituted that it seeks order and Unity. It cannot rest in disorder. It has sometimes been said that classification (putting things in order) is knowledge. We know by discovering likenesses and unlikenesses; similarities and dissimilarities; by bringing parts together into wholes; tracing unities in diversities. This is the way all the sciences are built up. The science of botany is the orderly array of the facts of the vegetable world; it is the setting forth of the unities that run through the diversities of vegetable life. So too with the other sciences. As soon as the facts concerning the rocks of the earth, and the stars and

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planets of the sky, were fully enough studied out, to reveal their lines of order and their unities, we had the sciences of geology and astronomy. So everywhere science is the push out to find the order in the disorder, the one in the many. And this push is instinctive to man's mind. The human mind hungers for order: it cries out for Unity.

Nor can it stop with the attainment of its object in a mere part of the creation, it must find it everywhere. Botany and geology and astronomy do not embrace all there is in the universe. Is there not an order running through nature as a whole? Is there not a great unity binding all its parts into one? This is what the mind longs for. And it can never rest until the answer comes, "Yes, there is such a Supreme Order; there is such a Supreme Unity."

But when the scientific mind impelled by its own irresistible instinct has thus pressed on until it has discovered order transcending order, and unity beyond unity, until it has reached at last an ultimate highest unity in the universe, what has happened? Why, it has simply climbed the same mountain peak from its own side that philosophy and religion, propelled by a like impulse in the human soul, have been from the beginning climbing from their respective sides. They have all been climbing from disorder to Order, from diversity to Unity.

This is exactly what philosophy's thought of First, or Efficient Cause, means. This is exactly what religion's thought of Creator, and Moral Ruler of all things means. As in the physical world the mind cries out for

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unity, and cannot rest until it finds it, so in the intellectual and moral worlds the mind's demand for a like unity is just as imperative. And the great final three-fold unity, unity in power, unity in intelligence, and unity in beneficence, which we find at the summit as we press up all these three paths of the physical, the intellectual and the moral, is what we mean when we say the Infinite, Eternal, Supreme, One — God.

Thus it is that the human soul's insatiate and ineradicable demand for order and unity is its own confession that it can never rest except in the thought of One Power over all, One Wisdom embracing all, One Plan of Good for all worlds, that is to say, a moral universe commensurate with the physical, "one far off divine event toward which the whole creation moves."

\* \* \* \*

A hint of the same thing I think we find in the mind's cravings for Harmony. The lowest form of harmony is that of sounds — mere physical harmony — sounds of such pitches that the waves of air which produce them are in length multiples of each other. Such harmony of sounds gives pleasure of its kind. But we soon rise to the perception of subtler harmonies — harmonies of sound with feeling and thought; and then, to harmonies that transcend sound and all things physical. The great musicians soon get to the point in their musical compositions where they feel that their instruments are poor and inadequate, and the resources of sound are practically exhausted, and they long to burst through the cramping limitations of the physical into the realm

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of the free spiritual. That is, the physical harmonies which the hand or voice can produce, and which the ear can hear, only dimly hint those higher harmonies which the soul feels. But when they come to try to express these feelings or to attach words to them, what is the character of the words? Instinctively they are religious words — words of adoration and worship. So deeply does the soul feel that its cry for the loftiest harmonies is really a cry for God — that is, a cry for the all-perfect Life and Love in whom all the soul's imperfections and dissonances are made complete.

Thus it is not by accident that music attaches itself so closely to religion. Harmonies of spirit are love and worship. When the soul yearns most for harmony on the human plane it feels most the spirit of love toward human beings. When it yearns most for harmony on the plane above the human it feels most the spirit of love and adoration to God. Perfect human Love is just perfect harmony between human soul and human soul. Perfect worship is just perfect harmony between the soul and God. Thus the soul's deepest longings for harmony are cries for a Perfect and Infinite Love. And what is that but God?

\* \* \* \*

Likewise in man's natural desire for Beauty and inability to be satisfied with any possible beauty of earth, there seems to be a secret testimony to his relationship to the divine. His longing for the beautiful quickly exhausts the possibilities of the physical, and rises to the richer realm of the intellectual and moral. It is the

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vision of the ideal that ever haunts him, woos him, thrills him — the ideal that is not on earth — that finds its realization only in the All-Beautiful, the All-Perfect. Thus it is that man's longing for the beautiful, which cannot be satisfied short of the Perfect Beauty, is really, in its deeper meaning, the soul's cry for God.

And man's desire for Truth, too, seems to be the same. Man's soul is so constituted that it cannot rest in falsehood or illusions. It wants reality, it wants verity. And this not merely at one point, or on the surface: it wants these everywhere, and above all at the heart of things. It cries out with a passionate cry that will take no denial, for Truth, absolute, eternal, unchangeable, as the meaning of this universe. Is such truth possible without God?

And the soul's cry for Right, too — right that is immutable and eternal — right and justice at the heart of being — what is that but a cry for God? No thought that ever came to man has more power to drive him wild, to make life intolerable, than the thought that possibly the great plan of things may not be just — the thought that possibly in the end wrong and not right may prevail in this universe. From this thought all that is sanest and highest in man revolts — saying, it cannot be. Amid all the shortcomings and seeming miscarriages of earth where the wrong seems to prevail, amidst all the dark problems of evil where we can see little light, there is that within us, deeper than all other voices, which says, There must be a solution; there must be a Justice throned on high which we may trust.

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And what is that voice but the divine within us witnessing to itself? What is it but the soul, as St. Augustine puts it, made for God, unable to rest until it rests in him? And when it does thus consciously rest in him, able to feel that whatever comes the Judge of all the earth will do Right, how great and inexpressibly precious is its peace!

\* \* \* \*

There are times when man's need of God seems especially clear, times when the soul's needs seem especially deep, and therefore when its cry for God is likely to be especially urgent. Let us note some of these.

Times of Danger are such.

Were you ever with a company of persons when a great danger suddenly came upon them? If so you know how instinctively a large part of them began to call upon God. When a sudden disaster overtakes a vessel at sea and all expect quickly to go down, we are told that many lips unused to prayer for once at least pray fervently.

In that terrible night in April 1912 when the Titanic went down and 1595 men, women and children were lost, how strong men prayed! Said one who was on the half-buried raft which saved forty persons: "Through all that wild night there was not a moment when our prayers did not rise above the waves. Men who seemed long ago to have forgotten God, called to mind the prayers of their childhood, and murmured them again and again. Over and over we all joined in the Lord's Prayer together."

Nor are prayers amid such experiences strange, or in

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any way unreasonable. Only, in such times men usually pray for what it is very foolish and useless to pray for, namely, some miraculous deliverance, some change of the laws of physical nature for their benefit. God is too wise and good to answer such prayers, for if his physical laws were not constant man would be safe nowhere, on land or sea, and the earth would become speedily uninhabitable. But there are prayers that are fitting and blessed in such hours of danger — prayers for self-forgetfulness and courage, and trust in God, so that one may, if possible, be of service to others, or if not, then so that one may go down calmly and peacefully, sure that it is as safe to die as to live.—

“The ship may sink,  
And I may drink  
A hasty death in the bitter sea;  
But all that I leave  
In the ocean grave  
Can be slipped and spared and no loss to me.”

The calling of the soul upon God, which means or which helps to create such trust as that, is blessed and only blessed.

Times of Trial and Discouragement are occasions when men are perhaps somewhat more likely than at other times to cry to God. And this is well. Dark hours I think are never made darker by going to God; but they are often made brighter. The great thing to be feared from discouragements and trials is that they may make us hopeless, and perhaps cynical and bitter. If this be their result, they are an evil indeed. But I

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think the world never found such a preventive of this as going to God. The very act of laying our troubles before one who is greater and wiser than we, whose plans are larger than ours, and whom we can trust, can hardly fail to help us look upon matters more calmly, and to see that there is no reason for bitterness or despair. As between two men, one of whom goes to God for help in his trials and the other of whom does not, I am sure the former will be likely to come through the braver, the calmer, and the more hopeful man — yes, and what is important, much the sweeter in spirit. He who in his hours of trial and agony learns to say as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will but thine be done,” by his very submission to the higher, wiser will, rises to a nobler plane of life.

If in dark times we go to God to coax, or bribe, or importune, or compel him to do *as we want*, we shall get no good, but shall be likely to come away more bigoted and pharisaical and hard of heart than we went. But if we go to learn that his ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts than our thoughts, and to get strength and grace to prefer his wisdom to our unwisdom, then we shall come away with new light and peace, having gained a great victory.

We are told that a party of clergymen went to President Lincoln at one time during our great Civil War when things looked very dark in the field — when disaster after disaster was coming to our armies — and thought to give him some religious advice. In their conversation they took rather the tone of reproach and

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chiding for what they imagined were his religious dera- ctions. Might not these military disasters be traced to his neglect of prayer? they gravely inquired. Had the President with sufficient earnestness and persistency besought God to be on his side in his plannings? Mr. Lincoln listened patiently, and then when they were through, said to them: "Gentlemen, really it had not occurred to me to try to get God on my side. Indeed my whole attention has been taken up in trying if I could to get on God's side." Then, after a pause, he continued, "And really I think, gentlemen, I had better keep on trying to get on God's side; don't you?"

Could the difference be better described between helpful prayer and pious impertinence? In every time of trial and need, let us know that if our object in going to God is to get him on our side, we had better stay away, for our prayer is impudence, if it be not profanity. But if our object is to get humbly and gladly on his side — that is, on the side of the true and the right — then our prayer will be blessed to us, and I am sure will be well pleasing to him.

\* \* \* \*

In Loneliness the soul instinctively cries out to God. And how much loneliness there is in every human life! It does not require residence in a forest or a desert to beget loneliness. There is no more weary or oppressive solitude than that in which many a soul lives in the midst of a crowd. To be in the midst of human beings who do not understand us or sympathize with what is deepest in us; to have hopes and fears, sorrows, yearn-

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ings and ideals, that we can tell no one, Ah, that is to be lonely indeed! What is the resource? The holiest, the sweetest, the most blessed resource that man ever found is God. In him we have a Friend that understands us wholly; to whom we can tell all; with whom is perfect sympathy.

We are all very much like little children. The little child goes to sleep peacefully in the dark if it knows the loved presence of its mother or father is near. Waking up in the night and finding itself alone it cries out in fear. But a word, or a touch of the parent hand, revealing the dear protecting presence, drives away the fear and brings peace again. So it is that in the night-hours of our soul's lonelinesses, we cry out for God, and cannot rest until we hear the Divine Voice or feel the Divine Hand.

When we suffer Wrongs our souls instinctively cry out to God. Alas! the danger is lest we cry out for vengeance upon the wrong doer. If we do that the lash will fall upon our own backs. The ideal for us is the prayer of Jesus for his crucifiers: "Father, forgive them: they know not what they do."

Or even if we are not able to reach the height of that, it is much to be able to look up and say, O God, thou knowest mine innocence; thou art not deceived; thou dost not misjudge or misunderstand. Many a man misjudged and wronged by his fellows, who, without this resource, would have been utterly overborne and crushed, has been able to bear all and keep a cheerful and courageous heart to the end, because in the night watches he has been able to look up to God and say:

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Thou knowest; none can hide the truth from thee; thou art a witness to my integrity.

\* \* \* \*

There is no time when the soul has more reason to cry out for God than in Temptation. He who in temptation to evil shuts God out of his thoughts is in most serious peril, if he be not lost already. But he who draws near to God, to shape his response to the tempter in the light of the Divine Presence, is safe. The question, "What will God have me to do," and the prayer, "God help me to be true and do right," will prove a shield against which the fieriest darts of temptation will be impotent. Or if, neglecting God, the tempted one has fallen into sin — then what shall he do? Shall he continue his neglect? This he will be only too likely to do. But he must not. God now is his hope. Let him, like the prodigal, say, "I will arise and go unto my Father." But not to escape justice. Let him not make the mistake of crying to be delivered from the penalty due his sin. There is no true repentance and no safety in that. Just penalty is kind. Let him pray for grace and strength to bear the retribution, and to rise up through the just desert borne, into strength to overcome in future time.

But perhaps the deepest and most passionate cry for God that the human soul ever knows is that which it utters in the presence of Bereavement. To see those who are very dear to us — dearer than life itself — loosen themselves from our arms and drift away from us out over the silent river — we unable with all our effort

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and tears to hold them back — this is anguish that is unspeakable. Is there no assuagement of it? No balm in Gilead?

The most helpful and blessed resource that man has ever found in all his experience on the earth is faith in an Infinite Love over all, who takes away our loved ones only to keep them in his more immediate presence and tenderer care; the faith that sings,

“They are not dead! they have but passed  
    Beyond the mists that blind us here,  
Into the new and larger life  
    Of a serener sphere;  
And ever near us, though unseen,  
    Their dear, immortal spirits tread —  
For all the boundless universe  
    Is life — there are no dead.”

The faith that all our dear ones are God's dear ones as well as ours, and therefore are safe, and that it is only a matter of a little while before the veil will part and the shadows will roll away, and we shall all be one again — re-united in our Father's house, — this faith makes us all conquerors over death. In its presence death vanishes away, and is not. All is life — Life Eternal in God.

\* \* \* \*

These, then, are some of the ways, and there are many more, in which the human soul cries out instinctively, and ever, from the earliest moment of its conscious rational existence, all through life, for something above itself, stronger than itself, more perfect than itself, the light of its day, the source of its life, the permanent

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amidst the changing, the explanation of its ideals, the infinite unity and harmony at the heart of all discords and diversities, the satisfaction of all its longings.

We see, then, the answer that is to be made to any of our fellow men who may ever talk lightly of our relations to God or of our dependence on him. We see the answer that is to be made when any speak, as thoughtless men sometimes do, of outgrowing the need of laying hold of the Divine Hand as we go through the world.

Talk lightly of our dependence on God? Outgrow our need of help higher than ourselves? Alas! who are we that thus we dream? Can the creature outgrow his Creator?

When we can call ourselves into existence, or sustain ourselves; when we can bring the morning at our wish, or the night at our call; nay, when we can create a blade of grass, or guide our own steps for one hour with certainty that within that hour sorrow and danger and death shall not overtake us, then, but not before, may we talk lightly of our need of God, or cease to listen to those deep voices of our nature that cry out for him.

Do without God? Yes, if the time ever comes when other things can do without the source of their life, then perhaps we can.

If the time ever comes when fish are able to do without water, or plants without light, or babes without mothers, or the earth without the sun, then, but not before, may we, we puny children of earth, turn our backs upon him who is our Strength and our Life, or stop our ears to those voices, without and within, that forever call us to his Protection and his Love.

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We little realize what treasures exhaustless and infinite we have in God.

Imagine a world without God, and then we shall see. Without God the universe loses its meaning. Without God reason is baffled in its every flight. Without God our ideals are dreams and our hopes are bubbles. Without God faith's feet stand on nothing. Without God immortality fades away, and man sinks down essentially to the level of the brute, and death speedily swallows up all.

But with God, a real God, a God of Infinite Wisdom and Love, the world is rational; the universe is alive; man is immortal; hope lights eternal fires; love reigns in all worlds; and there is no good thing in earth or heaven that is not waiting to be ours.



## II

# THE HIGHER CONCEPTION OF GOD

“If a man claims to know and speak of God, and carries you backward to the phraseology of some old mouldered nation in another country, in another world, believe him not. Whence this worship of the past? God is one and omnipresent; here or nowhere is the whole fact.”

*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

“Our God, our God, thou shonest here,  
Thine own this latter day:  
To us thy radiant steps appear  
Here goes thy glorious way.

We shine not only with the light  
Thou sheddest down of yore:  
On us thou streamest strong and bright,  
Thy coming are not o'er.

The fathers had not all of thee,  
New births are in thy grace:  
All open to our souls shall be  
Thy glory's hiding place.”

*Thomas H. Gill.*

“Our thought o'erflows each written scroll,  
Our creeds arise and fall:  
The life of God within the soul  
Lives and outlasts them all.”

*Frederick L. Hosmer.*

## II

### THE HIGHER CONCEPTION OF GOD

WHAT do we mean, or, perhaps better, what ought we to mean, when we use the word “God”? I think it is plain that a higher, larger, more reasonable conception of God is slowly making its way into the thought of our time. What is that higher conception?

Men are very likely to forget that the thought of God, like all other great thoughts, is an evolution; and hence in view of certain low and unworthy conceptions of the Deity which are entertained around them, or which, perhaps, they were themselves taught in their childhood, we hear them sometimes saying hastily that they do not believe in God, when the thing they really mean is, they do not believe in such or such a crude or childish or unreasonable conception of God.

\* \* \* \*

All words which stand for great and high realities have to grow into their full significance with time; new and larger meanings have to be given to them to accommodate men’s growing thought and widening experience. Science is such a word. Art is another. Home is another. Civilization is another. Sky and star and sun are others. Religion and God are others. These words were all at first very bare and meager — meaning little, because of the things for which they stood men had as

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yet arrived at only very poor and low conceptions. All the science there was in the world for many long ages was only of the crudest kind; therefore the name that stood for it could not possibly mean much to men. So, art was long very rough and rude, hence the name art for a long time could not be very significant. And homes were poor, hence the name home could not be very rich in associations. And the starry heavens were not understood, and hence using the name star did not awaken any very grand thoughts. And civilization, as men experienced it in early ages was comparatively barren, hence the name civilization could mean only a very little. Not until time had elapsed, and all these things had grown to be understood by men to be great, could the names by which they were known contain any great wealth of meaning. But as the ages went on, and human experience widened and deepened, and science and art grew, and homes became better and civilization advanced, and men found out that the stars were not sparks of fire but great worlds, all the words that stood for these things grew and grew in significance until they became at last the great words which we find them to-day.

Exactly the same is true with the name "God." Now it is a most significant name. But at first it was comparatively insignificant. Its meaning was meager and poor. But it has grown with man's knowledge of the universe, with man's power of thought, with man's moral advance, until it has become the great and peerless name it is. And it will grow to have larger and nobler meaning still in future ages as men advance.

## THE HIGHER CONCEPTION OF GOD

A man of some eminence once said to me, "People ask me if I believe in God. I answer them, Yes, I do, and No, I do not. No, I do not, if you mean the God of the crude revivalist and the Calvinist. Yes, I do, if you mean the God of reason and intelligence and the Sermon on the Mount." Many persons are branded atheists who are only atheists as regards certain low conceptions of God. They deny that any God exists with such or such attributes of cruelty or brutality or limitation. But in view of enlightened, reasonable, noble conceptions of Deity, they do not deny the divine existence.

It is a curious fact that almost all classes of believers in God have been called atheists by classes whose conception of God has been different, and especially that almost all religious reformers and men who have held up before their fellows ideas of Deity more lofty and pure than those commonly prevalent in their time, have had to bear the reproach of atheism. Refusing to represent the Deity in the manner in which he had been commonly represented, they were declared not to believe in God at all. For example, the heathen nations around about used to call the ancient Jews atheists, because they did not believe in any God that could be represented by any image or material object. And in the early days of Christianity the Greeks and Romans heaped the reproach of atheism upon the Christians, because they would not accept or acknowledge the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome.

In the same way in our modern times, any scientific theory that arises, which interferes with the traditional or commonly received views of God, is likely to be

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declared at once by some religious people to be atheistical, even if really its effect is not to weaken the evidence of God's existence at all, but instead to give men nobler conceptions of Deity. Well-known examples of this appear in the doctrines of geology and evolution. Early last century, when the science of geology sprung into being, and then later, when Darwinism came forward prominently to notice, a great cry was raised, "The new doctrine is atheistical; it leaves no room for belief in God." But the truth was, it only disturbed narrow views of God to give men broader, irrational views to give more rational.

What I am trying to say is well expressed in these simple lines:

### I

"A boy was born 'mid little things,  
Between a little world and sky,  
And dreamed not of the cosmic rings  
'Round which the circling planets fly.

He lived in little works and thoughts  
Where little ventures grow and plod,  
And paced and ploughed his little plots,  
And prayed unto his little God.

But, as the mighty system grew,  
His faith grew faint with many scars;  
The cosmos widened in his view  
But God was lost among his stars."

### II

"Another boy in lowly days,  
As he, to little things was born,

## THE HIGHER CONCEPTION OF GOD

But gathered lore in woodland ways,  
And from the glory of the morn.

As wider skies broke on his view,  
God greatened in his growing mind;  
Each year he dreamed his God anew,  
And left his older God behind.

He saw the boundless scheme dilate,  
In star and blossom, sky and clod;  
And, as the universe grew great,  
He dreamed for it a greater God."

*Sam Walter Foss.*

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Let me suggest briefly what kind of gods can no longer be believed in since Copernicus and Galileo, and Kant and Lyell, and Emerson, and Darwin have lived and written.

1. It is impossible for a world into which our modern science has come, ever again to believe in any such gods and goddesses as those of the ancient classical nations. The Greek mythology has in it elements of great beauty and fascination. The world will never get tired of reading about it, and of using it as material for poetry and art. But it can never again be conceived of as anything else than a world of the imagination. Considered as actual existences, "great Pan is dead," the dryads are gone from the streams, the fauns from the wood, the nymphs from the sea, Apollo from the sun, Jupiter from Olympus. All these live in poetry, and always will; but not in fact. Men believe in them as creatures of

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the fancy, but not as realities, and never can again unless civilization shall go backward.

2. Quite as impossible is it for a world of growing intelligence ever again to believe in the anthropomorphic Jehovah of the ancient Hebrews. The Jehovah of the earlier Hebrews was a tribal God, caring for one little handful of the people of the world, and not for the rest. So narrow a conception of God as that is inadmissible any longer. The Jewish Jehovah is represented in certain parts of the Old Testament as walking in a certain garden at the cool of the day; as having to come down from heaven to earth in order to see what was going on among men; as getting weary and resting; as partaking of a repast with one of the patriarchs; as making the sun stand still to allow a half savage chieftain and his band to make a little more thorough slaughter of a hostile band; as creating the world in six days; as drowning it with a universal flood, because it was so wicked, and starting again to populate it from one family some 4000 years, or not much more than that, ago. It is easy for any intelligent and unprejudiced mind to see that a conception of God which accepts all these legends as facts, is almost as much outgrown in a scientific, freely thinking age like ours, as is that condition and stage of mental development, which accepted the Greek mythology as real.

3. The growing intelligence and enlarging humanity of our modern world make it impossible longer to believe in the Calvinistic God of 200 years ago. The God of Calvinism creates the first man and woman of the race innocent, but inexperienced as babes; puts them in

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a Garden, hangs the everlasting weal or ruin of not only themselves but all their posterity upon their ability to resist the temptation to eat delicious fruit which was placed before them, when the temptation was allowed to be urged by all the wiles of the devil himself. Then, because these two utterly inexperienced children (for they were no better than children), who did not know good from evil, yielded to the temptation and ate the fruit, this same Calvinistic God dooms to a hell of unutterable and eternal torments, the whole race of men except such a chosen few as he has from all eternity elected and foreordained to be saved. This, in bare, exact language, is the God of the Calvinist — has been ever since Calvinism came into existence, and is still wherever real Calvinism continues to hold sway. Is it any wonder that Henry Ward Beecher in an article in the *North American Review* characterized it as “that impious and malignant conception of God”? Is it any wonder that Dr. George A. Gordon writing in the enlightenment of our day, declares that Calvinism is the “ultimate blasphemy”, and affirms that “it presents a spectacle of ruin and calamity so vast and hideous, so needless and so pitious, that the recoil from it to atheism is like going from an infinite horror to infinite peace”? Of course a single moment’s thought is enough to show that such a God cannot endure the light of a rational, humane age like ours. As fierce beasts of the forest which prowl about in darkness betake themselves to their lairs when the morning comes, so this conception of a cruel and unjust deity tends to shrink away and hide itself before the rising sun of our sounder and better thinking.

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4. Finally, our higher conception rejects altogether a localized or limited God, or a God removed outside or separated from the universe.

The idea that has been largely entertained in the past is that God somehow has a body like a man's; that he is in one place; that he is not here in this room and everywhere that a flower blossoms, or a bird sings, or a heart throbs, but that he is up in some far away heaven, sitting on a throne there, as an earthly king sits on a visible throne, and from that far away throne rules the world, much as the British King is supposed to rule his distant Indian Empire from his seat in England. I say the idea of God that has been popularly entertained in the past, and that still is a common one, is about that. God is localized; he somehow has a physical body more or less like that of a human being: he is outside and separate from the world.

But all this, science and philosophy and our modern thought are clearly and emphatically declaring cannot be. Such conceptions are crude, childish, inadequate, and must pass away. And their staying here, when they ought to be gone, is what, more than almost anything else, tends to produce atheism. So long as religion has no other kind of God than this to present, what wonder if men find themselves unable to believe in God at all?

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And now, having tried to make clear what kind of a God cannot longer be believed in, since Copernicus and Newton and Kant and Darwin have lived and written, let me try to trace, at least in a general way, some of the

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more important characteristics of the God who can and must be believed in — that is, the higher conception of Deity which is taking the place of the old gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome, the tribal Jehovah of the early Jews, the unjust God of the Calvinist, and every form of limited or localized Deity of popular belief.

In undertaking to do this let me say first of all, that, though I have called it the new conception, yet really it is only in a very limited sense new. Said Jesus, "God is a Spirit (or God is Spirit) and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth." This is exactly what I mean by the new conception of God. I call it new, not because it has first come into existence in our day, but because our modern science has given it a new meaning and is driving every other conception of the Deity out of the field. Really the conception is as old as Jesus and far older. Paul, who was partly contemporary with Jesus, utters it as clearly as his master: "In him (God), we live and move and have our being." And the writer of the 139th Psalm, living some hundreds of years before Jesus' day, sets forth the same conception in as graphic and beautiful words as ever were penned: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there. If I make my bed in the grave thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

True, as I have already intimated, the earliest conception of God entertained by the Jews was of a local,

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tribal Deity — fierce, cruel, vengeful, jealous; who often took the form of a man; who, while he showed favor to Israel as his people, was hostile to all other peoples. Much of the writing of the Old Testament represents God according to this lower view. But the Bible is not one book, but many. It has not a single author, but many. It was written at different times, and at different stages of the nation's civilization and religious progress. It does not set forth one view of God, but different views, some lower, some higher. The conceptions of God found in the Bible show a clear progress — they are an evolution. While some of the writers give us this crude conception, some, as the greater prophets, and especially Jesus and Paul, rise far above that, and reach clearly the high thought of God as the Universal Spirit, Infinite, Eternal, Perfect.

And what is true of the Bible is true outside of the Bible. Right among the ancient Greeks and Romans, where popularly the belief in the whole Pantheon of classic gods and goddesses held sway, there were living and thinking and writing, and teaching to such as would hear them, such lofty spirits as Pythagoras and Socrates and Plato and Aristotle and Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, — men whose conception of God had risen to be nearly as high and pure as that of Isaiah or Paul, or even Jesus.

Plato calls God "The One," "The Good," "The Sovereign Beauty," "The Ruling Mind, which orders all things and penetrates all things." Aristotle calls him "The Supreme Intelligence"; Anaxagoras, "The Divine Mind, the Infinite Wisdom"; Pythagoras, "The

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Universal Soul." Going out beyond Greece and Rome, we find the Persian Zoroaster describing God as "The Principle of Goodness and Truth; the Sovereign Intelligence; the All Seeing." The ancient Hindu Code of Manu declares him to be the "Invisible," "Eternal," "All-pervading Spirit." The oldest of the Vedas, which is perhaps the most ancient religious book in the world, calls him "The Great Soul," "Omnipotent, Eternal, Omnipresent." And a later Veda, but still very ancient, calls him "The Supreme Mind, which transcends all other intelligences. . . . the Incomprehensible Spirit, who illuminates all, and gives gladness to all; from whom all proceed."

Thus we see that in all lands, not only have men believed in and worshipped God, in some form or forms, but ever the tendency has been toward a conception which drops off bodily shapes, physical attributes, localizations, limitations and imperfections, and says with Jesus, "God is Spirit," — the Infinite Spirit, the Central Intelligence, Power, Will, Life, Soul of the Universe.

Of course the masses of the people have never in any land reached this exalted conception. But now the coming in of modern science and of freedom to think, is causing men everywhere, to a greater degree than was ever known before, — the masses and the common people as well as the leaders — to take refuge in this highest, most spiritual thought of the Divine Nature, up toward which the great thinkers and prophet souls of many ages and lands have been leading the way.



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Among the more notable popular contributions made within the past generation to a better conception of God, or to an answer to the question, What ought we to mean by God? I may mention two. One was made by Herbert Spencer (unintentionally) in his scientific doctrine of "Persistent Energy," and the other by Matthew Arnold (purposely) in his ethical or religious doctrine of "The Eternal Power, not ourselves, that works for righteousness."

Spencer uses the term "persistent energy" to express that Power which, though mysterious, is yet, as he declares, the most certainly existent of anything in the universe; that Power which, as he urges, is and persists everywhere and in everything — the secret of the growth of plant, and flow of river, and swing of planet, and beat of pulse, and whirl of atom in granite. We trace all potencies and motions out and on until they lose themselves, in what? In this deep mystery of "persistent energy." This "persistent energy," Spencer insists, is the throb of the universe. It is the pulsing life-blood of all nature. It is the soul of all worlds — and all potencies.

But now try an experiment. Try the experiment of calling this "persistent energy" (science's name) by another name suggested by religion. Call it by the great name "God" (for that is religion's name for it, and a name as true as the other), and what light comes! Call it God, and how suddenly and inescapably are we confronted with God looking out upon us from every star and grass-blade and pebble on the ocean's beach! Immediately, as if by miracle, the whole universe be-

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comes full of God. Thus through the door of science, which so many have feared as atheistic, does God burst on us everywhere.

Matthew Arnold has much to say of “A Power, not ourselves, that works for righteousness” ever and ever, in all the affairs and on-goings of humanity. That there is such a Power, whether we give it a name or not, working in men and in all history for moral ends, every intelligent student of the world’s past well knows. Now call this Power, God (for God is religion’s name for this again) and how living and real does the Deity begin to be, and how full of God do all human events and all times at once become!

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We have often been told that the doctrine of Evolution gives a death-blow to the idea of God. True, it does give a death-blow to old and lower conceptions, but not to the new and higher. Many of the firmest believers in God as a Universal Intelligence, from the old pre-Socratic Greek philosophers down to Hegel and Emerson, have been believers in evolution — not evolution in the full and complete sense in which it has been understood since Darwin, but yet believers in the central thought of evolution — that the world has been a growth, a development, from low beginnings or simple elements, or as Spencer would say “from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous,” all the way up to what it is now. Evolution instead of removing God (according to the higher conception of God) out of the universe, only shows the manner in which he has brought the

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universe to be what it is. Evolution does not disprove, but rather it implies an eternal purposeful Power. Without a Power, wise, persistent, eternal, at the heart of all the evolution, running through it from beginning to end, the unsleeping, unresting, mysterious but never absent cause and explanation of it all, there could have been no evolution. We can have no evolution without three things. First, we must have something wrapped up, to evolve, or to be unfolded; next, we must have a path prepared beforehand along which the evolution can proceed; and finally, we must have an adequate Power back of all to do the evolving. Evolution can be nothing, therefore, but the manifestation in time and in material or other forms, of a mighty Power transcending human knowledge,—that marches forward, orderly, patient, purposeful, irresistible, to the accomplishment of its great ends. And what is that, but saying that evolution is just God carrying out his great, world-wide, universe-wide and eternal designs in orderly, unhasting, unresting, truly God-like fashion?

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I have spoken of helps furnished by Herbert Spencer and Matthew Arnold to the higher conception of God. But we need not stop with these. I think Alexander Pope has helped some minds by that striking couplet in his "Essay on Man" in which he speaks of the universe as a "stupendous whole, whose body Nature is, and God the Soul."

To be sure we have already seen the thought of God as "the Soul of the World," or as "The Universal

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Mind," to be as old as the philosophies and religions of Greece and India. Yet I think in the light of modern science the idea gains new significance. Is there a Soul side, or Spirit side, or mind side, as well as a body side (or matter side), to the universe? Many thoughtful persons are asking, "Why should there not be?" and finding light in the inquiry. To think there is, at least throws the universe into analogy with ourselves. As for ourselves we all know that we have not only a body side but a mind side. And looking out beyond ourselves, upon our fellows, we say we know that they have the same. True, the mind in them we cannot see. But what of that? There are so many evidences of its existence that we cannot doubt it. And so we say, we know that our fellow men have a mind side as truly as they have a body side. But now, looking out upon the great and marvelous universe, how overwhelming is the evidence that it too has a mind side as truly as a body side! Plan, order, system, purpose, which are the proofs of mind, are as conspicuous and inescapable in the universe as in men. Intelligence runs like a woof through all nature; take it away and the cosmos sinks at once into a chaos. To be sure, you cannot see the mind in nature. But you can see it as much there as you can in human beings. There are exactly the same kinds of proofs of the existence of a World-Mind that there are of the existence of a mind in any man or woman, and ten thousand times as many in number.

But now what does all this mean? It can mean only one thing. Translated into the language of religion it means God. The mind side of the universe, which is so

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manifest and inescapable everywhere, is just the God side of the universe. And that means that the universe is full of God; and that no more truly do your minds and mine look out upon the world, through your eyes and mine, than does God, the Universal Soul, look out upon you and me through flower and frost crystal and sun and man.

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In trying to shape out into greater clearness the higher conception of God, I think to some minds, at least, the thought of Life is useful — God the Supreme Life, the All-comprehending Life of the Universe.

I had occasion to converse, not long since, with a lady who told me she did not see that she believed in God. The God of her childish conceptions was a venerable old man up in the sky. As she grew to womanhood and came to think for herself she knew there could be no such being as that. Nor any more reasonable did it seem to her to believe that there could be such a God as the popular churches and the popular theologies and some parts of the Bible appeared to her to teach — namely, a God who forever sat on a throne in a far off local heaven. And so she said to me with some hesitancy, but very sincerely, "I think I am an atheist." The conversation made me feel sure that I saw where her trouble was, and that her apparent disbelief in God was only the protest of reason against believing in an irrational god, and an appeal for something higher; and so I said to her, "Perhaps your disbelief is right after all, indeed I am rather disposed to think it is. But now let us look upon the world — does it seem to you a dead

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or a living world? Do you have no sense of a Life higher than your own, larger, more universal, of which the life of each individual tree and plant and animal, and your own life, seems but an infinitesimal part — as it were a ripple, a drop, a spark?" I shall never forget her answer. "Oh," said she thoughtfully, "I cannot express my sense, my feeling, my conviction, that there is somehow a Life larger than mine, with which my own is strangely connected. I cannot believe that anything is dead. I have studied botany, and I stand dumb before the mystery of Life which that reveals. I have studied chemistry, and I cannot but feel that matter itself is alive. Everything seems to me to be alive. I feel that the whole universe is filled with a strange and mysterious Life which I cannot understand, but which I am convinced exists."

I said to her, "Suppose we call that Life, God; for God is just religion's name for it." She was silent. Then, with a new light in her face she inquired, "Can that be God?" and added thoughtfully, "If that is God, then I believe in nothing so much as I believe in God." And from that day the world was full of God to her. From that day she understood the deep truth of the lines:

"Thou art, oh God, the Life and Light  
    Of all this wondrous world we see;  
    Its glow by day, its smile by night,  
•     Are but reflections caught from Thee.  
Where'er we gaze Thy glories shine,  
    And all things fair and bright are Thine."



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Poets are swift-footed runners who scale the heights in the new worlds of thought far ahead of their slower-footed scientific and philosophic brothers, and from the peaks gained shout back thrilling announcement of what they see beyond. Wordsworth was pre-eminently such an *avant courier* in the announcements he made regarding the new and higher conception of God which he saw to be slowly rising on the thought of our modern age. Do we remember his famous lines, written near Tintern Abbey, in which he describes what God is to him? —

“A sense sublime,  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,  
And rolls through all things.”

Does any one say this is only the vague and fanciful dream of a poet, which no philosopher or scientist cares for? I reply, Prof. Tyndall, quoting this very utterance of Wordsworth, declares it “a forecast and religious vitalization of the latest and deepest scientific truth.”

Tennyson has given us some striking poetical lines not less illuminating in their conception of God, and at the same time not less harmonious with the deepest and latest science:

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“The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas,  
the hills, the plains —  
Are not these, O soul, the Vision of Him  
who reigns?  
Is not the Vision He?

God is law, say the wise; O soul, and  
let us rejoice,  
For if He thunder by law the thunder is  
yet His voice.

Speak to Him, then, for He hears, and  
Spirit with spirit can meet —  
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer  
than hands and feet.

The ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of  
man cannot see:  
But if we could see and hear, this Vision —  
were it not He?”

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Such are a few faint shadowings forth of the great new — old yet new — thought of God, as it is rising upon the larger intelligence of our modern age. The lower conceptions, born of cruder thinking and poorer knowledge and darker times, are passing away; and as they disappear one by one, it is not strange if we hear men whose eyes have caught no vision of anything higher, say, “God is dead. Atheism like a black sea rises and must engulf the earth.” But let not any heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. God is not dead, nor dying. The skies of the present, and still more those

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of the future, have in them great light. With the passing away of the old lower conceptions which have so long been current, there are coming others, higher and better, rational where the others were irrational, in harmony with science where the others were hostile, in every way more honoring to God and helpful to men than those which they displace.

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It is feared in some quarters that even if science does not destroy God and banish him from the universe, it will at least make him a cold abstraction, distant and unreal, to whom we can no longer pray, whose interest in us will forever be gone.

But let us feel no alarm here either. If God remains the Energy at the center of all things, the Eternal Power, not ourselves, that works for righteousness, the Light of the World, the Universal Mind, the Infinite Life — what does all that mean, but that he remains also the Infinite Goodness, the Eternal Providence, in whose arms of unceasing care and protection we are by night and by day, and to whose bosom we go when death calls us from these earthly scenes. The mercy, pity and love that are in humanity did not create themselves: they can have come only from a source higher than themselves, as streams from a fountain. We may be sure that Infinite Fountain will not fail.

With such a conception of God as this, we do not have to ascend into heaven to bring him down. He is here. We do not need to sigh, like one of old, "O that I knew where I might find him!" We cannot lose him. Wher-

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ever power, order, life, truth, justice or human affection is, there is he. He is the artist that paints the sunset, and fashions the frost-crystal. He is the might that upholds the world. He is the justice that knocks down the thrones of the world's wrong, and strengthens the arm of all human right. He is the love that looks out through the mother's eyes as she gazes upon her babe.

What shall we call him? Of one thing we may be sure, we shall not give him a name that is great enough or high enough or good enough. All our possible language must fall below the reality. Jesus, the greatest of the world's religious teachers, said "Father." Has any mind ever suggested a worthier or a truer name? If I myself were to venture to suggest any change it would be to add to it the equally great, and probably the equally true, name, Mother.



III

GOD AND LIFE'S DEEP  
EXPERIENCES

"Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?"

*The Second Isaiah.*

"God is our refuge and strength;  
A very present help in trouble;  
A Father of the fatherless,  
A strength to the needy in his distress,  
A refuge for the oppressed,  
Our dwelling place in all generations."

*Old Testament Psalm.*

"As gold is tried in the furnace,  
So He tries the hearts of men;  
And the dross and the dross shall suffer loss,  
When He tries the hearts of men.  
And the wood, and the hay, and the stubble  
Shall pass in the flame away.  
For gain is loss, and loss is gain,  
And treasure of earth is poor and vain,  
When He tries the hearts of men.

As gold is refined in the furnace,  
So He fines the hearts of men.  
The purge of the flame doth rid them of shame,  
When He tries the hearts of men.  
O, better than gold, yea, than much fine gold.  
When He tries the hearts of men,  
Are Faith, and Hope, and Truth, and Love,  
And the Wisdom that cometh from above,  
When He tries the hearts of men."

*John Oxenham.*

### III

## GOD AND LIFE'S DEEP EXPERIENCES

RELIGION presents itself to man under four aspects: as something to be gone through with, or performed; as something to be believed; as something to be studied, analyzed, or speculated about, and as something to be experienced. In other words, it presents itself as a Ceremonial; as a Creed; as a Philosophy, and as a Life.

What are we to say of these differing conceptions of religion?

Doubtless we should say that all are legitimate; all are useful; but no one taken alone is complete — each needs the others to round it out to wholeness. Especially is this true of the first three, that they need the fourth. Experience or life is the end toward which each of the others ought to lead — the only result which gives them justification for being. Without religion as a personal experience, ceremonials, creeds and philosophies are a body without a soul.

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Experience of religion! I know there is a prejudice in many minds against the thought. To some persons, such experience seems only superstition, or cant, or pretense; to others, an empty dream of the imagination. Persons with habits of unfettered thinking, or who care much for science and reason, are perhaps particularly

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liable to be among those who look upon religious experience with incredulity and disfavor. But why should this be so? Can any one give a good reason?

No one denies the validity of experience in matters outside of religion. Indeed the scientist and the man of independent thought are the very ones who, in other things, are likely to appeal to experience most. They do not want speculation, they tell you; they want to know. They want the testimony of somebody who has seen, heard, felt, experimented. They of all men, then, should show not least but most respect for experience in matters of religion.

If I believed that religion rested upon a foundation of mere hypotheses and speculations I certainly should not be a religious teacher. Indeed, if I did not believe that the main, central truths of religion are as evident, certain, verifiable as anything known to man — as the facts of science, or as the demonstration and axioms of mathematics — I certainly should never stand in a Christian pulpit. I do believe that nothing in man's knowledge rests upon a more secure foundation — upon one more absolutely incapable of being disturbed, than religion. Why? Because it rests upon the soul's deepest experiences. Below these it is impossible to go. If here is not reality, then indeed

“The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,  
And earth's base built on stubble.”

For even the validity of our knowledge of the outward world depends upon the truthfulness of the world within.



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You say agriculture you know about, for that has to do with tangible things; and a science like geology you can be sure of, for that deals with hard facts. But do you really think that a stone is any more a solid fact than is love or hope? Are you any more sure that the stone is out there, than you are that you love your child or your friend?

Are you any more certain, when you plant your seed in the spring, that you will get a harvest in the fall; or when you go to bed at night tired from your toil, to rest for the next day, are you any more sure that there will be any next day than you are that justice is better than injustice, and truth than falsehood? I think not.

As regards any object of external nature, as a flower or a tree, — are you any more sure that it really exists, as to your senses it seems to, than you are that over the tree and over all else you see, and over your own life, there is a Power higher than the tree, and higher than yourself, from which, somehow, the tree and yourself came, — a Power and Wisdom that can be trusted — which you have learned by all the experience of your life can be trusted? I think not.

Men talk strangely, sometimes, about the physical world — the world of external nature — being certain, and the internal world of the mind and the spirit being uncertain, — as if the distant could be more certain than the near — as if knowledge of the soul's foreign lands could be more reliable than knowledge of the soul's home lands. Do we not know that the things of external nature — trees, grass, houses, hills, other persons, animals, skies — *are* really our soul's *foreign*

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lands, the lands which the mind reaches by journeying away to a distance. The own country of us all, the land in which we habitually dwell, is the internal world of our own thoughts, our own feelings, our own desires, aspirations, hopes, fears, memories, longings, loves, imaginations, emotions. Shall we say that our knowledge of this near, familiar land is uncertain, untrustworthy? and that to get knowledge which we can rely on we must travel away from home, sailing out from port of eye and ear, over oceans of air and mysterious spaces we do not understand, to the foreign land of objective things — physical, external nature — stone, tree, river, sky?

No, there is nothing so near us as ourselves. There is nothing we so immediately and certainly know as ourselves. Our deepest knowledge is experience, and not even that experience, either, that comes to us from without, indirectly and roundabout by way of the senses, but that deepest of all possible experience which is immediate, which is internal, which is of the mind, the heart, the conscience, the moral and spiritual nature, upon which true religion ever builds.

“The things which are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.” Why is the religion of experience so sure? Because God has builded it into man’s moral and spiritual nature. By all of man’s long experience on the earth it has grown to be a part of his deepest self. The creator of his soul has engraved it on his soul: nay, has planted it in his soul, a plant of the eternities. It is the divine in him. It is God in him. Therefore he can depend upon it as cer-

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tainly as he can depend upon the universe or upon God himself.

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One of the striking things about the preaching of Jesus when he was on the earth was his constant talk about what he called "the Kingdom of God," or "the Kingdom of Heaven." He represented his constant desire, his great aim, as being to establish that kingdom, to build it up among men. He taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name . . . thy kingdom come." He pronounced blessing upon the humble and lowly in spirit, and those who were persecuted for righteousness' sake, saying, "Yours is the kingdom of heaven." When men desired to know what that kingdom was, he represented it as the reign of truth and love, of peace and good will, on the earth. And when asked further about it, he said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you."

Now, what did ordinary hearers of Jesus, those who saw only superficially, think about this talk? Undoubtedly they thought it nonsense. The "kingdom of heaven" to them was probably nothing but a fancy, a hallucination of the brain of the Nazarene. As for them, they preferred solid, enduring things, not dreams and moonshine.

A kingdom! Herod had a kingdom that was real; for could they not see the swords and spears that supported it? Kings in other nations round about had kingdoms that were substantial; for were they not guarded by powerful armies? Especially was the empire of world-commanding Rome solid. But this

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kingdom that this religious enthusiast declaimed about, which consisted simply of ideas, principles, truths, sentiments, and that was declared to be within the mind and heart — let him go and preach it to silly women! Were they not men with too much shrewdness and judgment to be caught with such chaff?

And yet, now that nigh 2,000 years have gone, how stands the case? Which do we see to have been right, the prophet of religion, who proclaimed a kingdom of the soul, or they who could see nothing strong or enduring, or worthy of regard, but that which appealed to the eye, and ear, and the physical senses of man? Alas! in a few brief years every vestige of Herod's kingdom was gone. Rome stood longer, but in spite of her unparalleled strength she too fell. And all these nineteen centuries, since the prophet's voice was heard, have been full of the noise of toppling thrones and the wreck of kingdoms, empires, dynasties. But how about that kingdom of the spirit of which Jesus spoke? Has it faded or failed? Not so! Steadily has it strengthened; century by century has its dominion widened; never was it so powerful, and never were its foundations so firm as to-day. Amidst a world of change it has proved the one enduring reality.

“In vain the surge’s angry shock,  
    In vain the drifting sands;  
Unharmed upon the Eternal Rock,  
    The Eternal Kingdom stands.”

Truly, indeed, the things that are seen are temporal; the things that are not seen are eternal. Verily, the

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solid things are not those which we hear and see and taste and handle. The solid things are those of the soul. Religion builds upon what cannot be shaken, because she builds upon what is deepest in the nature of man.

\* \* \* \*

And this, too, is why religion can supply man's deep and permanent needs as nothing else can.

What are the deepest and most permanent needs of man as he journeys through the land of earth? Of course, he must have food to eat and water to drink by the way, and clothing and shelter to protect him from the cold. These are essential, for without these he dies. But these alone, and everything else on the plane with these, satisfy the wants of only the brute beast in him. Is he only a brute beast? Has he no wants other than the ox or the tiger? Ah, there is a higher side of his nature which has its needs as deep and imperative as those of his body. He was made to think, and feel, and hope, and love, and pray; to cherish truth, to obey reason, to champion right; to care for his fellow men, to help every good cause; to abhor evil, to spurn wrong; to aspire after that which is above him, to walk joyfully and holily through the world, to keep his heart full of patience and trust to the end, and when the evening of his life's day comes,

“Approach his grave

Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him,  
And lies down to pleasant dreams.”

Where is he to get help to do all this? Yet his need for all this is quite as great as his need for food or drink

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or shelter for his body. For what could compensate if he should feed the animal in him and let the angel starve?

To be sure, in this world of so sore poverty and physical want and physical suffering, it is a great problem how to supply adequately the bodily needs of the poor. The importance of this should not be overlooked. And yet the larger, deeper, graver problem is how to supply the spiritual wants of both poor and rich. For, oh, how much ignorance, fear, sorrow, disappointment, pain, heartbreak, despair, sin, lust, greed, cruelty, hate, misery and evil in ten thousand forms is to be seen all up and down the world, among rich and poor alike! And where is this spiritual want and misery to find relief?

When man is hungry with that hunger which is of the soul, and which physical bread only mocks; when he thirsts with a thirst which the things of sense cannot quench or touch; when he is tired, so that no bed can rest him, weary in mind and heart, tired of life itself; when hope fails; when strength is gone; when courage departs; when the currents of human friendship and love seem to freeze; when sorrow and disappointment fall upon him and break his heart; when bereavement and death stand coldly, bitterly, in his path and must be met; and saddest and most terrible of all, when temptations to evil roll over him like billows and sweep him under; and when sin, like a body of death, fastens itself on him, dragging him down, with resolves broken, desire baffled, will enfeebled, down, down — , then where is help to be found? In what direction, in such deep needs as these, may we look for light or hope?

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There is no direction but one; in all the world's ten thousand years of search for help in her experiences of mightiest need, no at all adequate resource but one has ever been discovered. What is that? I need tell none of you who have observed, none of you who have read history, none of you who have human hearts — that resource is religion — the personal experience of religion in the soul — the conscious, purposeful, earnest opening of the soul's doors to the incoming spirit of God, the power of God, the peace of God, the love of God, the life of God. The tides of life from above once set flowing through a man, then, but only then, there is hope for any human soul. And that is the reason why religion, particularly the Christian religion, of God's Fatherhood and unfailing Love to all his children, has been able to reach, quicken, ennable, sanctify, transform, save men in every condition of life, as nothing else has ever done.

\* \* \* \*

Let no one misunderstand me. There are other influences in this world besides religion that have elevating, ennobling, saving power. I would not undervalue or make light of these. Among the more important of such influences are doubtless education, homes, association with the good — and in their way, science, philosophy, laws, physical environment. All these should be employed and made the most of, and some of them are exceedingly important. And yet it is no disparagement to any of these to say that, as an agency for bringing hope to the despairing, comfort to the sad, courage to the faltering, succor to the tempted, strength to the

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weak, patience in trial, light in bereavement, calmness in the presence of death, and above all moral and spiritual regeneration to men dead in indifference and sin, none of them have a tithe of the power of Religion. As a practical reformatory influence in society, as a begetter of moral power, as an inspiration to men to live for the highest things, religion has been, at least through all Christian history, is now, and probably always will be, without a rival, without the possibility of a rival — something alone, unique, incomparable, truly divine — divine because through it man consciously lays hold of a Strength higher than his own.

I trust that this makes clear what I mean by Religion as an Experience. Nor is Religion as an Experience something confined to any one class of persons, or to any age or time. It has come in the past, and is coming still, to untold millions, of all classes, — to kings, to beggars; to the wise, to the simple; to the greatest minds of the race, like Jesus, Paul, Augustine, Milton, Cromwell, Gladstone; but none the less it comes to the lowly woman in her garret; to the sailor on the sea; to the prodigal son squandering his substance in riotous living in a far country; to the old man tottering above his grave; to the little child in its sorrow. And it waits to reveal itself to you and me, whenever our need is great, and human help fails.

\* \* \* \*

We none of us know much about our future. God kindly hangs a veil before our eyes. But this much we most surely know, the future of each of us will be full

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of deep heart-needs, which must be supplied from some source higher than ourselves.

We shall all our lives have work to do that will not be easy — that will tend ever to sink into mere drudgery and slavery. What can prevent it? What can give us songs in our toil? Nothing so certainly — this is the testimony of the ages — nothing so certainly as the acceptance of our tasks as from God, to be done for him, not only as a part of his plan of things, but under his eye, and in the light of his smile if done well.

We shall all, a thousand times over in the years that are coming, be pressed hard by temptation — temptation to hold lightly by our integrity; to stoop somewhat below high honor; to suppress the truth when we ought bravely to speak it out; to vary from the line of strict honesty in business; to be selfish when we ought to be generous; to ask what is easy, or popular, or expedient, when we ought to think only of what is right; to yield weak and slavish obedience to our appetites or passions instead of keeping our lower natures in subjection to our higher. What can help us in these crisis times of life? What can give us strength to stand on our feet and be men — yielding obedience ever to conscience as our king? There is no such help as Religion. The soul that has once definitely committed itself to the religious life, that has opened itself to religion as an experience, that has learned to identify the voice of conscience with the voice of God, is armed against temptation in all its forms as no other can possibly be. Consciously in alliance with a Power higher than his own, by a subtle law that Higher Power flows into his life.

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So, too, as we travel on across the years we must all expect to meet disappointments, discouragements, failure of plans, dashings to pieces of cherished expectations; such is the human lot. How are we going to be able to bear up under these? The danger is that as a result of them we may lose hope, courage, incentive, interest in life. What can save us? Nothing can so effectually save us as a noble, Religious Faith, which looks beyond seemings to realities, beyond temporal things to eternal, and sees that in the soul itself lies all enduring good; so that even if riches take to themselves wings and fly away, and earthly prospects fail, and disappointments in matters of worldly interest or ambition come, the real ends of our existence are not affected; still, the soul, strong in the life of God and confident of an immortal destiny, rises serene above all these temporary clouds of earth, its hope undimmed, its courage undaunted.

Nor is anything less to be said as to the practical value of Religion in the sorrows and anxieties connected with that deepest mystery, death. It does not take a long experience in this world to teach us all that we are in a land whose green soil on every side breaks with startling ease into graves. The sunniest faces of to-day, to-morrow are wet with tears of sorrow for loved ones gone to return no more. And the end for ourselves, we know is only just a little way on down the road.

What can help us in all this? Man in all his experience on the earth has found no such help, as the calm, strong faith in the soul, that Wisdom and Goodness are at the heart of this universe — that we and all our loved ones

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for life and for death are in the hands of One who cannot do wrong and will not be unkind.

\* \* \* \*

Thus it is that Religion as an Experience comes to us, not like so many others of earth's helpers, to offer us its aid in hours of sunshine, and when all goes well. Rather does it come to proffer its help most urgently and generously when other resources fail. Indeed, there is no time of deepest, sorest need in life, when it is not at hand for us if we will have it.

"From the cradle to the grave,  
It comes to save!  
From the world's temptations,  
From tribulations,  
From that fierce anguish  
Wherein we languish,  
From that torpor deep  
Wherein we lie asleep,  
Heavy as death, cold as the grave,  
It comes to save.

From doubt where all is double,  
Where wise men are not strong,  
Where comfort turns to trouble,  
Where just men suffer wrong;  
Where sorrow treads on joy,  
Where sweet things soonest cloy,  
Where faiths seem built on dust,  
Where love seems half mistrust,  
Hungry and barren and sharp as the sea,  
It comes to set us free.

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Oh! where its voice doth come,  
There all doubts are dumb,  
    There all words are mild,  
    All strifes are reconciled,  
    All pains beguiled.  
There light doth bring no blindness,  
    Love no unkindness;  
    Knowledge no ruin,  
    Fear no undoing,  
From the cradle to the grave  
    It comes to save.” \*

How does it save? How, in these deep needs of life, does Religion as Experience come to set us free? In the only way possible. By teaching us, like little children in the darkness, to reach up and touch God’s right hand in the darkness, and so be lifted up and strengthened. By letting us feel in all our times of deepest human need — in joy and sorrow, in sunshine and storm, in life and in death — that around about us and all whom we hold dear, are the everlasting Arms of Love and Care. By digging deeper, and filling more full, the Fountains of Life within our souls. By opening up anew the connection between our lives and the Infinite Life of God.

\* *Matthew Arnold* (slightly altered).

## **IV**

# **GOD AND HUMAN SORROW**

“Blessed are they that mourn.”  
*Jesus.*

“Sorrows humanize the race:  
Tears are the showers that fertilize the world.”  
*Jean Ingelow.*

“Sorrows marry us to God.”  
*Dante.*

“God draws a cloud over each gleaming morn,—  
Would we ask why?  
It is because all noblest things are born  
In agony.

Only upon some cross of pain or woe,  
God’s Son may lie;  
Each soul redeemed from self and sin must know  
Its Calvary.

Yet more than hearts can ever pine  
For holiness,  
Our Father, in His tenderness divine  
Yearneth to bless.

For neither life, nor death, nor things below,  
Nor things above,  
Shall ever sever us that we should go  
From His great love.”

*Frances Power Cobbe.*

## IV

### GOD AND HUMAN SORROW

THERE is a brotherhood of human sorrow. Perhaps few in early life understand this, or even suspect it. Yet such a brotherhood exists, and sooner or later the revelation of it comes. Sometimes it comes slowly, through many shadow-haunted years; sometimes suddenly, by a great and unexpected disappointment or bereavement. But come sometime, in one way or another, it does to most or all.

This brotherhood of sorrow is more wide and deep than that of birth, or race, or culture, or condition, or religious faith, or joy. Indeed there is no other human brotherhood so universal, or so potent.

Nothing else breaks down caste, and pride, and scorn of man for man, as does suffering. The savage is our brother when he suffers. Our deadliest enemy we cannot but feel for when he is in pain or sorrow. The tyrant who has oppressed a people until he has become to every mind a sceptered Moloch whom they hate with awful hatred, is almost forgiven if disaster and continued affliction come upon him.

All lines of rich and poor, white and black, aristocracy and common people, Romanist and Protestant, Christian and infidel, enlightened and barbarian, fade out, in the presence of deep grief. These are but currents on

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the surface; while beneath all, flows from man to man the broad world over, the under-current of a common humanity. And so, although in ordinary times when prosperity makes the vessels of our lives float lightly, we drift hither and thither, apart, yet when bitter sorrow comes and weights us, and presses down the keel of our life-ships far into that deeper current, so as to feel its hidden power, we all float together, one way. We are all brothers then — in the great fraternity of human suffering.

When a regiment of French soldiers was marching through one of the streets of Paris in the days of the Commune, with quick step and flying colors and sound of martial music, and suddenly at a street crossing came upon a poor coarsely clad woman, her eyes swollen with grief, carrying a little pine coffin containing the body of her dead babe, and the regiment instinctively stopped and all the men stood with uncovered heads while the poor stricken mother passed by, it was only an eloquent illustration of the brotherhood of human sorrow. Every officer and soldier confessed by his act that that poor suffering woman, whom no one of them knew, was his sister, — made such by her grief.

\* \* \* \*

Go from home to home in any community, and gently, by kindly sympathy, find your way to the deepest feelings and secrets of the inmates, and you will discover that in nearly every home there is a “skeleton in the closet” that the world knows not of. It will be different in each — as different as the lives and experiences of

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human beings. But seldom will you fail to find in some heart or hearts under the home roof a sadness of bereavement, or disappointment, or wrecked hope, or loneliness of spirit, or remorseful regret, or anxious forboding.

In one home it is a vacancy caused by death, of husband or wife or child — mourned and mourned, until the fountains of mourning are drained dry.

In another it is illness. A loved one, who a few weeks ago seemed in perfect health, has been stricken with disease, and now in a hushed room a dear life hangs trembling in the balance.

In another home it is a puny child — sweet, bright, dearly loved, but so delicate that the chilling fear is never absent from the mind of father or mother that some slightest adverse thing may any moment destroy the frail life, as a mere touch shatters a structure of exquisite frost work.

In another it is husband or brother or lover who went away to that bitter, bitter war, and now lies buried

“In Flanders fields, where poppies blow,”  
or else who returned irrecoverably crippled and maimed  
for life.

In another home it is a husband and father, once noble and true, the light and joy of his family, now slowly but surely sinking beneath the slavery of drink.

In another it is a boy who is drifting into bad companionship and evil habits — and thus wringing the hearts of those who love him and see where it all must end.

In another it is an unhappy marriage.

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In another it is poverty, bitter poverty; perhaps caused by some unforeseen calamity, sweeping away the savings of an industrious life.

In another still, it is some secret guilt, love, or disappointment, which has never been told to any living being, and never can be, but which has long been eating the joy out of existence.

So wide is the brotherhood of human sorrow.

There is a legend of Buddha that well illustrates it. There was a certain woman among the followers of the great prophet of India, who had lost her darling babe — her first-born, her all. She was overwhelmed with grief. Her friends tried to comfort her, but in vain. At last she took her dead child in her arms to the blessed Buddha and besought him to restore it to life. His heart was moved with compassion, and he promised the mother that her child should be given back to her alive again, if one condition were fulfilled; but it could be on no other. She must go and bring him a simple herb or medicine, which he named, from a house where no one had ever died. The medicine was one so common that it could be procured almost anywhere; but the essential thing was that she must obtain it in some home where death had never entered. Eagerly the poor mother set out on her quest, which she thought would be a short one. Taking her babe in her arms, she went to the nearest house, then to the next, and the next, and so on and on, only to find everywhere that death had been there before her. "Oh, woman, there is no home where bereavement has not come," was the reply that everywhere met her. All day she journeyed; and again

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the second day until near the set of sun, when, weary and fainting with her walking, her weeping, and the burden of her dead, she repaired again to the Buddha. But as she drew near and entered his presence, a new light had begun to shine on her face; for now for the first time was she conscious that she was not alone, but belonged to a great sacred brotherhood. "Oh, Buddha," she said, "I verily thought that my sorrow was greater than was ever laid upon mortal. But I find it is only that which is common to my fellows. There is no home out of which loved dead have not been borne." So saying, she asked not the great teacher again to do that which was not in the order of nature, but stooping down calmly took up her dead and bore it away.

And so she found comfort and healing in having her eyes opened to the fact that others, too, as well as she, suffered, and in opening her heart in sympathy for them.

\* \* \* \*

Sometimes we think of sorrow as confined to those who are old, or at least in mature life. But this is a mistake. It comes almost with opening life. I have sometimes thought that it never brings bitterer cups than to the young. To the young, sorrow is a new experience; they are not prepared for it; they have not yet obtained perspective and a range of vision whereby they can see beyond it; they have not yet learned patience and endurance, as they will later; they have not yet found out the deeper meanings of sorrow, as sometime they will discover them if their wisdom keeps pace with their years.

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Ah, the brotherhood of human sorrow! It wears no badge. It is bound together by no laws that men have made. It issues no formal signs and passwords. But its mystical membership is found in all lands and under all skies.

And often the man with the firm step, or the woman with the sunny smile, that you think not of, has taken the most numerous degrees of sad initiation and advancement in that brotherhood.

As a woman sometimes trains a lock of wavy hair to cover up and conceal from view an unseemly scar on her temple or forehead, so noble men and women, with sad pains, school themselves to cover from common sight the scars of their sorrows, by smiling faces and cheerful words.

The old Greek Achilles, stoutest of the warriors who went to the siege of Troy, had yet one spot where an arrow or a spear could pierce him as easily as a babe. If his enemy could but find that, he was lost.

How few of us or our fellow men are there who have not some spot where we have been pierced! But as it was the practice of the old Spartan soldiers to hide their wounds, that none might know of them, so we cover up these heart-wounds, and go about the streets with calm faces.

Often, I do not know but I may say generally, the very deepest bitternesses in human lives do not come to the knowledge of more than a few, if any, outside of those who bear them.

As the mightiest forces in the physical universe are silent, so are the deepest griefs of the human spirit.

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Some joys can be easily talked about, they are so light and superficial. But who has not experienced joys so deep that chatter about them would be profanity?

So with the affections of the heart. Superficial love can be easily enough put into words. But deepest love, like deepest streams, is most often silent.

So too with sorrow. The very profoundest we cannot tell. Words are too shallow to use in connection with it. We suffer and are still. And the sympathy that can help us in our sorrow, must be kin to our own silence; it must be the deep sympathy of the heart, that expresses itself through the tear in the eye, the warm pressure of the hand, deeds of kindly helpfulness, not through garrulous words.

\* \* \* \*

It is one of the startling and tragic facts connected with our human nature that we are often so little acquainted with those who are nearest to us.

There are many persons whom we have met every day for years, and yet we do not know them. We suppose we do; but we are quite mistaken. It is only the external that we know — not the real man or woman. Nay, there are those who have lived for years under our own roofs, into the world of whose deeper lives very likely we have never once entered, or even looked — who in spirit are as much strangers to us as if our homes were on different continents.

There are brothers and sisters who grow up together, but who never know each other except in the most superficial way; who never come close enough to each

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other to be sharers in each other's deepest joys and sorrows. What an irreparable loss is this!

There are husbands and wives that always remain strangers. Have we read Thomas Carlyle's pathetic, almost heart-breaking confessions regarding his wife, made after her death? I think this is just what those confessions mean. In his intense absorption in his literary work he lived a self-centered and isolated life. This left her to live also an isolated life — so isolated and so lonely that her heart almost broke. When she was dead, he saw the wrong he had done himself, and especially the wrong he had done her. But it was too late. He could only pour out his heart in unavailing tears. If we would know how bitterly he repented let us go and watch him as in his age and infirmity he makes his regular pilgrimage to her grave, and there in the quiet village church-yard, where no eye can see, kneels and with hands clutching the grass in the passion of his grief, kisses again and again, a hundred times over, the dear spot where she sleeps. How strange and tragic it was that a heart which so truly loved should have allowed the very object of his love to starve, and pine away, and die for want of the life-giving touch of it!

There are parents who never become acquainted with their children, and children who never at all deeply know their parents. Oh, the pity of it! Oh, the loss, greater than words can tell, to both! There are many parents who are never able to influence their children. As soon as the children grow up, they are off into wild and evil ways, with no regard to the wishes of those whom they ought to honor and heed. Why is this?

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Oftener than otherwise it is because through all their childhood years they are kept so far away from their parents. The father is so busy with his profession or his daily work, and the mother is so absorbed in her cares, that they forget that their children have joys and sorrows—problems to solve, burdens to bear, ambitions, aspirations, and disappointments — an unseen soul-life — much of it to them very tragic — in which they so much need, and would so quickly respond to, the loving interest and sympathy of father and mother. And so, because the father and mother did not get near to them in their young years when it would have been so easy, so beautiful, and so helpful, they now find themselves separated by a gulf that they see not how to bridge.

How far apart are many of those who call each other by the dear name of friend! There is no true friendship that does not count it a privilege to share in sorrows as well as joys.

There is a room in every human soul, the door of which, so far from ever being opened by the conventional and ordinary intercourses of life, has its hinges and its lock rusted by these. This room is the holy of holies of our being. It is in this room that God dwells, if we open our souls and really give him an abode within our souls at all. It is here that all dearest and sacredest loves dwell. This room is the shrine of our beloved dead. Here our holiest joys and our holiest sorrows abide in sacred silence. Truly,

“The heart knoweth its own bitterness;  
And a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joys.”



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We have now dwelt long enough upon the fact of human sorrow. We have seen how many forms it assumes. We have found how unescapable it is in every human life. While we have been seeing this, we have at the same time been catching glimpses of a truth even deeper. And that is, that sorrow is not all dark; many of its clouds are strangely silver-lined; there are deep meanings in it that do not appear to the superficial gaze; shrink from it much as we may, we could not do without it; like shadows, and rain, and winter, and night, it has its place in the great economy of good.

Let us inquire a little more carefully just why and how it is, as Jean Ingelow says, that "sorrows humanize the race;" how it is, as the Epistle to the Hebrews declares, that men are "made perfect through suffering;" just what is the meaning of Jesus' deep words, "Blessed are they that mourn," and the words of the ancient prophet: "Thus saith the Lord, I have seen thy tears; behold I will heal thee;" and the mystical words of Dante, "Sorrows marry us to God."

First of all, sorrow is a blessing in that nothing else has such power to deepen and enrich human character.

Of course we may say murmuringly, if we will, could not other means have been devised by Infinite Wisdom for building up man's moral and spiritual nature, except by enduring a discipline of suffering? To that question, we can only answer, Little data has been given us for judging what Infinite Wisdom could or could not have done, different from that which it has done; and therefore to speculate upon the matter cannot be very profitable.

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Two or three things, however, are clear.

Either man must live forever on this globe, in these physical bodies, or else there must be death. In other words, there could not be an immortal, spiritual life for man, beyond the present, without death coming to set him free from his present physical body. But where death is there must be sorrow, for how could beings like us, who love, be separated from our dear ones, even for a few brief years, without grief? Moreover, physical death necessarily involves causes to bring it about, as physical decay, disease, etc. Still further, so long as we are only finite beings, limited in knowledge and power, it is in the nature of things that we must make mistakes, fall into accidents, expect what will not come and therefore be disappointed. Thus we are able to see that pain and sorrow are natural and necessary results of our human finiteness. Hence to complain that God gave us sorrow as a part of our lot in life, is simply to complain that he made us finite; that is to say, that he made us at all.

\* \* \* \*

Sorrow, then, seems to be necessary, if man is to exist. But, it is not a mere hard, brute necessity — something which he must simply submit to because a superior power inflicts it upon him, with no good to come to him out of it. It is a beneficent necessity. It is a means leading to an end of value. Every pang brings a fruition if we will have it so. We do not complain that the muscles of the arm can grow strong only by exercise; or that the mind can gain knowledge and strength only by study and discipline. Then why

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should we complain that the attainment of moral strength requires moral discipline?

He who has never known sorrow has touched only the surface of life. He is a child, not a man. What does he know of the mighty problems of life; the stern struggles of life; the temptations of life; the ambitions — the noble ambitions, that stir the soul; the ideals that shine above one like the eternal stars, and smite one with every growing dissatisfaction because he falls below them; the woes of others, which he must needs share because he has a human heart?

No fine, high development of character or spiritual life was ever reached, or in the nature of the case ever can be, without spiritual struggle and discipline — and that means more or less of suffering.

If one cares only for a superficial life, lived down on the plane of the animal, having no desire to reach up and lay his hand upon those higher keys of his being that give forth diviner harmonies than the mere animal can appreciate, then he may well desire to live a painless life — the more painless the better. But if he is not content with such an existence, graded on the low level of the body, giving little room for aspiration after anything beyond the pleasures of sense, but, cares instead, to struggle up to the highest within his reach, of experiences and attainments — to compass the best that it is within his power to compass, and become all that it is possible for him to become, at any price, then let him welcome pain and sorrow when they come; for they are nothing less than the divine coin with which the very best gifts from God must be purchased.

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A great critic said of a celebrated vocalist of Europe, "All she wants to make her the very finest singer of her time is a great sorrow." He judged with a profound insight. I believe it to be strictly true that all the great singers of the world, whether by voice or pen, who have sung themselves into the hearts of humanity — from blind old Homer, to Robert Burns the poor plowman, or John Howard Payne the homeless author of "Home Sweet Home," — have been men who have sung out of souls deepened and ennobled by sorrow.

"The mark of rank in nature  
Is capacity for pain;  
'Tis the anguish of the singer  
Makes the sweetness of the strain."

A friend of Emerson tells this story of the great Concord seer:—

"Once I was standing with him at a college exhibition, where a young man, in whom we were both interested, had taken two highest honors. Turning to Emerson I congratulated him, as I congratulated myself, upon the great success which our young friend had achieved. He replied, 'Yes, I knew he was a fine fellow. And now, if only something will but fall out with him amiss — if for some reason he should become unpopular with his class; or if his father should fail in business, thus throwing him upon his own exertions, or if some other misfortune should befall him — then I think all will be well with him.' At that time I was young enough and shallow enough to be surprised and indignant at what he said. I did not then know, what afterwards I found

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out, that when Emerson himself was but eight years old his father had died, and that to the penury of those early days, to his mother's determination that the boy should be trained at Harvard College, to the careful struggles by which each penny was made to work the miracle of the broken bread by the Sea of Galilee, he owed, or believed he owed, much of the vigor, the strength, and the manhood of his own life."

It was this experience of his own that opened Emerson's eyes to his young friend's need of something more rigorous than sunshine and ease and popularity to give him moral fibre.

President Garfield, who in his own early life had known to the full what hardship meant, declared: "Nine times out of ten the best thing that can happen to a young man is to be tossed overboard and compelled to sink or swim for himself."

Tell me, among the young men you have known, has it been the sons of rich fathers, who have been shielded from hardship and surrounded by luxury, who have developed into the strongest and noblest men? Or has it been the young men born to labor, who have obtained their education by struggle, sacrifice and their own determined efforts?

So too with young women — is it the petted, indulged, fashion-environed, that develop into women of character, live lives of service, find life gloriously worth living, and die honored and beloved?

How many of us have seen cases like this: Two happy, light-hearted sisters grow up side by side. They are educated essentially the same; seemingly they differ

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little in tastes, capacities, or nature. One marries into rich and fashionable society, and enters upon a life of ease, luxury, pleasure-seeking, and self-indulgence.

The other marries, seemingly well, but soon clouds begin to gather about her life. Business misfortune comes upon her husband, and his property is swept away. Discouragement and broken health follow, ending in a few years in death. She is left a widow, with a family of little children dependent upon her. Accustomed to ease and luxury in early life, and knowing almost nothing of care or sorrow, now her lot is one into which care and sorrow come in full measure. But, bravely she takes up her load. Without complaint she adapts herself to her changed sphere. The children must be clothed, fed, educated, reared to be good and true men and women. And she must be responsible for it all. She saves, economizes, plans, toils; forgets herself, lives for her family; with a conscientiousness that never swerves and a love that never tires goes forward year after year to fulfill her holy mission.

Thirty years go by. Both these girls are now women of fifty. Compare them once more. Do you perceive the same similarity now that you did thirty years ago, when they stood together on the threshold of married life? Not so. The one to whom responsibility and sorrow came so early, has more lines on her face than the other, and grayer hair; but in character and every womanly attribute she is immeasurably the superior. Her ways have grown gentle; her voice soft and kind; her heart large and tender; her whole nature has rounded and ripened and mellowed, until you can say of her

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nothing less than that she is one of God's own true, noble women.

And her children — what of them? The nobleness and heroism of the mother's character has communicated itself to them, and they are all entering upon life respected by all who know them.

How about the sister upon whom outward fortune has smiled so propitiously, and whose life has been one long day of pleasure-seeking and sunshine? She is a frivolous and selfish woman. Her heart has not enlarged; her spiritual nature has not developed; her character has not rounded or strengthened or deepened. And the children she has reared are entering upon life to be as superficial, as selfish, as worthless as she.

Why this difference between these two sisters, reared in the same home, similar in nature, giving equal promise as they set out upon life? The answer is plain. It takes struggle to develop character. There is no best growth of spirit under a clear sky. There must be clouds and fertilizing rain — shall I say tear-rain? — in their time and place, or the heart will not put forth its finest blossoms and bear its richest fruit.

We are told that it is in absolute darkness that birds are trained to sing their most beautiful songs. So it is in the darkness which the hardships and sorrows of life bring, that the human spirit learns its divinest music. While we thank God for the music, let us not be so foolish as to chafe at the darkness that gives it birth.

The figure of the furnace and the molten metal is a true and suggestive one as applied to the afflictions of human life. Nothing is so effective as the purging

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fires of trial to burn the dross out of human souls. So then do not shrink; but —

“Let thy gold be cast in the furnace,  
Thy red gold, precious and bright;  
Do not fear the hungry fire  
With its caverns of burning light;  
And thy gold shall return more precious  
Free from each spot and stain;  
For gold must be tried in fire,  
And hearts must be tried by pain.”

Says Jean Paul Richter: “The burden of suffering seems a tombstone hung about our necks, while in reality it is only the weight which is necessary to keep down the diver while he is hunting for pearls.”

Wrote Horace Bushnell: “I have learned more experimental religion since my little boy died than in all my life before.”

\* \* \* \*

But the highest of all the uses of sorrow I have not yet named. It is that which it has in fitting us to be helpful to our fellow men.

Would any one be a benefactor of his fellows in any deep way? Experience of sorrow in most cases is the best possible preparation. It seems to be a law that in things of the spirit only he who has himself been stricken can ever be a healer.

The reason is, when one has felt sorrow himself, then he can sympathize with others in their sorrow, as otherwise would be impossible. He has joined the brotherhood, and so what touches any member touches him.

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Writes one who had been deeply smitten to another  
who had suffered:

"I could not comfort you a year ago,  
But God since then has let me understand;  
Now, when I see your tears so often flow  
I do not speak, I only take your hand,  
And then you know  
I, too, have walked thro' Sorrow's weary land.

God gives me power to comfort you at last,  
To calm the bitterness of your despair;  
So let your burden now on me be cast,  
For all you feel to-night my heart can share.  
My grief is past  
In the new joy of having yours to bear!"

*Marjorie Crosbie.*

Writes a bereaved mother, thinking of her dear babe  
long since taken from her arms:

"Because of one dear infant head  
With golden hair,  
To me all little heads  
A halo wear;  
And for one saintly face I know,  
All babes are fair.

Because of little death-marked lips,  
Which once did call  
My name in plaintive tones,  
No voices fall  
Upon my ear in vain appeal  
From children small.

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Two little hands held in my own,  
    Long, long ago,  
Now cause me, as I wander through  
    This world of woe,  
To clasp each baby hand stretched out  
    In fear of foe.  
The lowest cannot plead in vain —  
    I loved *him* so."

Thus it is that the experience of sorrow in our own lives makes us human, tender, sympathetic toward all who suffer, and especially toward all who need our love and help.

Until we have ourselves suffered, we are likely to be too light-hearted and too much absorbed in our own selfish interests and pleasures to think much about other's needs. But when the iron presses down into our own souls, and our own hearts begin to bleed, then we awaken to the fact that we are in a world of humanity; new ties, undreamed of before, relating ourselves with our fellows, are discovered, and Pity, fairest of all the daughters of heaven, is born within our souls.

\* \* \* \*

Nearly all the world's best charities, self-sacrifices and moral heroisms are the children of suffering. Seemingly nothing short of experience of the world's wants and woes can give the moral earnestness and the deep sympathy with humanity that are necessary for a great helper of men.

It was not until after the degradation and affliction of his race had pressed long and heavily upon the heart of Moses that he became the great deliverer.

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It was the iron of Rome's bondage and corruption entering into the soul of Luther, in those years of his early manhood, that stirred and nerved him, and made him capable of becoming the moral hero that he afterwards was.

It was coming into personal contact with the sufferings of the slave, and seeing them and feeling them in all their dreadfulness, that made Garrison, and Mrs. Stowe, and Lovejoy, and the rest, leaders in the anti-slavery movement.

It was because John B. Gough had felt in his own soul the horror of bondage to strong drink, that he was able to appeal with such power and effectiveness against it.

Everywhere it is the man who has felt and suffered, that goes forth to heal and bless.

Is it a large price to pay — suffering for the privilege of benefaction? It is the price that has had to be paid ever since the world began, and will have to be paid to the end.

By common consent Jesus is the prince of human benefactors. Why? It is because he was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." It is because the sins and sorrows of men moved his nature so profoundly. Without his intense sympathy, which is but another name for suffering, he never could have found men's hearts as he did, or spoken words which would have thrilled humanity for nineteen hundred years, as his words have done.

And the principle, true with reference to Jesus, is equally true with reference to every human being. If you have not suffered you have not truly sympathized.

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If you have not sympathized deeply you have done little — much as you may persuade yourself to the contrary — you have done little really to benefit others. Sufferers may not always be saviors. But saviors are always sufferers; whether on the large scale on which Jesus saves, or on the humble one on which it is given to you and me to be saviors, of our children, of our friends, of our fellow men, if we will.

“The cry of man’s anguish went up unto God:  
    Lord, take away pain,—  
The shadow that darkens the world thou hast made,  
    The close coiling chain  
That strangles the heart, the burden that weighs  
    On the wings that would soar,—  
Lord, take away pain from the world thou hast made,  
    That it may love thee the more!

Then answered the Lord to the cry of his world:  
    Shall I take away pain,  
And with it the power of the soul to endure,  
    Made strong by the strain?  
Shall I take away pity that knits heart to heart,  
    And sacrifice high?  
Will ye lose all your heroes that lift from the fire  
    White brows to the sky?  
Shall I take away love, that redeems with a price  
    And smiles at its loss?  
Can ye spare from your lives, that would climb unto mine,  
    The Christ on his cross?”



V

## GOD AND GREAT CALAMITIES

“If I, from my spyhole, looking with purblind eyes upon the least part of a fraction of the universe, yet perceive in my own life’s destiny some broken evidences of a plan and some signals of an overruling goodness, shall I then be so mad as to complain that all cannot be deciphered?”

*Robert Louis Stevenson.*

“We hear at times a sentinel  
Who moves about from place to place,  
And whispers to the worlds of space  
In the dark night, that all is well.

“And all *is* well, though faith and form  
Be sundered in the night of fear;  
Well roars the storm to those that hear  
*Thy deeper voice across the storm.*”

*Alfred Tennyson.*

## V

## GOD AND GREAT CALAMITIES

THERE is a “tragic side” to nature and human life. No one can deny this. Does it necessarily, for thoughtful minds, shut out a vision of God?

The consideration of this question has been suggested by recollections of the great war which for more than four years so fearfully devastated Europe. But I want to make my inquiry larger than any single war, and larger than all wars. I want to make it take in all that darker side of nature and human experience which involves contact with forces seemingly beyond man’s control which bring him pain, suffering, defeat, disaster, death.

Besides wars, I want it to include, and this particularly, all great natural calamities — such eruptions of volcanoes as buried Pompeii and Herculaneum in ancient times; such earthquakes as those which destroyed or nearly destroyed Lisbon and Messina and San Francisco; such destructive floods as those that sometimes occur on the great rivers of China, and on our own Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio; cyclones like those which from time to time sweep with such destructive rage through our prairie states; such fires as a few years ago destroyed half the great cities of Chicago, Boston and Baltimore; such ocean waves as that which inundated the city of

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Galveston with so terrible a loss of life and property; great railway disasters; great steamship disasters, like the sinking of the Titanic; such epidemics as the bubonic plague, yellow fever, typhus and cholera, which decimate whole populations; famines, which often cause the destruction of millions of lives.

What do these things mean? Do they not mean that we all are in a world where nature is heartless, where there is nothing higher than blind, hard, unfeeling force and matter and law, where there is no Providence of wisdom or justice over the world or over man's life, and no God that knows or cares? Job, in the days of long ago, did not find it easy to reconcile the ways of God to man, when he stood in the presence of disaster of incomparably less magnitude and seriousness than these that I have named. Can we reconcile the existence of these vastly greater calamities with the thought of a God that is worthy of man's respect and honor and worship?

These are very serious questions. They confront all mankind. No man who is not a shallow man can help feeling the gravity of them. Of course I am not presumptuous enough to suppose that by anything I can say I can remove entirely the difficulties connected with these problems — problems which are perhaps the profoundest and the most baffling of any that ever present themselves to the human mind. In the very nature of the case, how can finite man ever expect to understand fully the ways of God who is Infinite and Eternal?

And yet, I think there is much light for us, if we will receive it — light that drives away much of the dark-

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ness, and indeed all the deepest and most oppressive darkness, and reveals to us firm ground for large faith and trust.

\* \* \* \*

In order to understand whether God's ways are just or unjust, kind or unkind, or, to put it differently, whether nature is malevolent or benevolent in its deeper meaning, we need to consider several things which are too often overlooked.

One is the necessity of human relationship — the necessity of the dependence of man upon his fellow men.

Nothing is more clear than that many of the evils which befall us in this world come through our fellows, or from the fact that we are dependent upon others and they upon us. Chicago was burned because a woman tipped over a lamp and set an out-building on fire which was so situated as to communicate its flames to tinder-box wooden buildings in the vicinity, and through these to the great city beyond.

The city of Johnstown in Pennsylvania was destroyed not because of anything its people who suffered had done, but because they lived in a valley above which was a faultily constructed reservoir of water, which others had built and were responsible for.

Many railway and steamboat disasters are caused by blunders or mismanagement on the part of officials or employees. The passengers on the train or the boat who lose their lives do not bring the catastrophe upon themselves; it is brought upon them by others on whom they are dependent.

These are specimens of one large class of calamities in

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the presence of which we are prone to cry out in grief and pain, "God is unjust, the plan of things is unkind, or else men would not thus be called upon to suffer for others' shortcomings."

But let us look at the matter a little more carefully.

If these calamities prove the cruelty of God at all, they prove his cruelty in making us social beings, beings in any way dependent upon one another. So long as we lean in any way upon our fellow men who are more or less ignorant or weak or morally imperfect, of course we must find our crutch sometimes breaking and letting us fall.

The simple fact that our fellow beings are finite makes it impossible but that they should sometimes fail us, and bring us to disaster when we depend upon them. So then, if all this large class of evils that comes through dependence upon our fellow men shows cruelty in the divine plan, the cruelty must lie in the fact of our having been put, as I have said, in human relations at all. But now ask yourself whether the relationship of man with man, and the consequent dependence of man upon man in this world, is on the whole an evil. Would men be better off if there were no such relationship? The fact simply is, mankind could not exist on the earth without it. Cut off from one another we are cut off not only from the highest good and richest blessings of life, but speedily from life itself. To whom are we all indebted for the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the fires that warm us, the house we live in, the books we read, ninety-nine hundredths of the comforts and necessities of our daily lives? To others.

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Has the race been able to work its way up and up from the beast to the human being, from savagery to civilization? This would have been impossible had not man been closely related to his fellows in toils, in plans, in achievements; in joys, in sufferings and in disasters. It has been hand in hand, by mutual co-operation, and therefore necessarily through mutual disappointment and suffering, that every step of progress has been made by the race.

If man was to exist on the earth at all, of course he had to be either subject to human relations and therefore dependent upon his fellows, or else isolated from his fellows, with no mutual relations and no dependence. If the plan of isolation would have produced less evil and more good to the race than the present plan then we may charge the author of the present plan with malevolence. But if, even with our short sight, we can see that the present plan is not only incomparably the better, but the only one which could have insured the progress and development or even the continued existence of the race, then surely we must withdraw our charge, and say that the Great Power that arranged things as they are was not unwise in so doing, but wise; not unkind, but kind.

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A second thing needs to be considered if we would get much light upon the question of the cruelty or the kindness of nature. It is the value of freedom of choice, freedom of will, in man.

A very large proportion of the evils that come upon

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man he brings upon himself. He puts his hand into the fire and is burned. He goes into water beyond his depth and is drowned. He exposes himself to wind and wet, takes violent cold, and pays the forfeit with his life. He eats too much and at improper times, and gradually undermines his health thereby. He drinks intoxicating liquors until the vitality of his system is burned up. He is loose in his moral character, and as a consequence sees his sons and daughters grow up rakes and harlots. He builds bad steamboats and they sink with him. He constructs buildings that are fire-traps, and they take fire and burn up. He builds up a great city like San Francisco or Messina in a locality which he knows is subject to earthquakes, and neglects to construct his edifices in a manner best calculated to resist the shakes which earthquakes give. He builds a great city, as San Francisco was built without providing it with two or three separate sources of water supply and two or three separate sets of water mains — provisions which every modern city should make. As a result, when an earthquake comes the damage done to his city is great, and when fire follows, his water supply fails and the disaster swells to enormous proportions.

The people of China denude their mountain-sides of trees, and as a result the melting snows and rains which ought to be held back by such growths come rushing down in sudden floods which overflow and devastate vast regions in her valleys.

Wars are man's work, they do not come of themselves, nor are they sent of God. They are the results of man's wickedness and folly. Nations arm themselves to the

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teeth, and stand confronting one another with legions of soldiers on land and fleets of battleships on the sea, and as a result of course wars arise, and must arise so long as such conditions exist. In these and a thousand other ways man tramples under foot laws of life and health and protection and safety, which he understands or ought to understand, and as a result brings upon himself pain, suffering, disaster and death.

What are we to say to all this? Shall we say that we have here a proof of the unkindness of God or of nature? This is often said. But the truth is, those who make such assertions simply overlook the fact that in man's being allowed to choose for himself — to do right or wrong, to act wisely or foolishly, lies the very possibility of his being a man. Does not the very fact of one's being free, and a moral agent, make it necessary that he should be allowed to choose folly as well as wisdom, evil as well as good, if he so desires? Our complaint against God as unkind, therefore, simply becomes a complaint that the Creator has endowed man with that noblest attribute of his being — that attribute without which he could never be man — free will.

But is God unkind because he has endowed man with a free will? Would it have been kinder to have made man a machine — so that he could not do anything but the right and the safe? Every thoughtful man as soon as he comes to look at the matter fairly sees in an instant that the nobility of his nature lies in the fact that when evil or folly tempts him he is able to say, "I can yield to it if I will, but I will not. I have power to take the false, but I choose to take the true." Without free will there

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can be no such thing as character, no such thing as human responsibility; no such thing as virtue. There can be no virtue in doing right when one is compelled to do it and cannot do otherwise. So that I repeat, if all this class of evils that come upon men from their own neglect or wrong-doing prove God to be unkind, then they prove him to be unkind in making them men and not machines, beings capable of virtue and responsibility, and not stones.

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A third thing we need to consider, if we would get at the truth as to whether nature, or the Power ruling nature, is to be regarded as malevolent or benevolent. It is the question whether natural law — government by natural law — necessarily involves unkindness. We call natural laws unkind because they are invariable, that is, because they are laws at all. Because the law of gravitation refuses to change itself for the benefit of the man who falls from a building, but insists on bringing him to the ground, very likely at the expense of his life, we say the law of gravitation is malevolent.

Because fire will burn a little child that comes in contact with it, or will consume a forest or a great city if the conditions favorable to a great conflagration are present, we call the laws that govern combustion unkind.

Because water will drown women and children who fall into it, or will break through a dam that is not properly constructed, or will sweep away houses or towns that stand in its path, we say that the laws which control the movements of water are unkind.

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Because cyclones and storms work havoc to man when he crosses their route, we say that meteorological laws — laws without which man could not exist — are unkind.

Are we wise in saying these things? Does the invariableness of these laws show that they are malevolent — or that God, the Power back of them, is unjust?

What are earthquakes? They are the results of the regular and invariable working of nature's laws. There are laws that govern the expansive power of steam. It is because these laws exist and are invariable that man is able to harness steam and make it drive his machinery in all parts of the civilized world. But these same laws that govern the expansive power of steam, under certain conditions create earthquakes. Let water penetrate through some fissure or opening far down into the earth and there become turned to steam by the earth's internal heat, and the expansive power of the steam thus confined must produce those earth convulsions which we call earthquakes.

There are other causes of earthquakes. One is supposed to be the gradual cooling of the earth's surface and its consequent shrinking. The shrinking causes it to shrivel or wrinkle. The wrinkles are the mountain chains and the valleys between. In this wrinkling process of necessity there come at times tremendous disturbances and breakings-up of the earth's crust. These disturbances and breakings-up are earthquakes. Earthquakes have been and are the indispensable agencies by means of which those changes in the earth's surface have been effected which at last have made the

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earth habitable by man. There seems reason to believe that if there had been no earthquakes in the past, man would not have existed on the globe to-day. Shall man, then, declare that earthquakes are a sign of the malevolence of nature, or the unkindness of God?

Suppose we lived in a world where there were no laws of nature, or, what would be the same thing, where there was no invariableness in law. For example, suppose the law of gravitation were not always in force, or that chemical laws, or the law of correlation and conservation of energy sometimes changed or became for a time inoperative. Suppose the laws which now govern the coming of the rain and the falling of snow, and the running of rivers, and the burning of fire, and the succession of day and night and the cooling and contraction of the earth's crust, were sometimes operative and sometimes not. What would be the result? It would be impossible to portray the dreadfulness of the result. Everything would be thrown into disorder. There would be chaos everywhere.

We can build houses because nature's laws are uniform. If gravity sometimes attracted upward and sometimes downward we could have no houses — and indeed no objects on the surface of the earth. We can have fires to warm our houses because nature's laws are uniform. We can travel by rail or ride upon the sea only because nature's laws do not vary. Thus we see that law is kind. It is anarchy, it is want of law, that is unkind. The farmer knows when to plant and sow his fields, because nature's laws are constant. Seed time and harvest, summer and winter fail not because rigorous

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law rules everywhere. Sailors can sail the seas because nature's laws are uniform. Nothing is so kind anywhere as wise, just, rigid law. Show me governments that really govern by law, and without favoritism and I will show you the governments that are best. Show me homes where all things go on according to principles, high and noble principles which all understand and which do not change, and I will show you the best homes. Only foolish persons, who look only on the surface of things, suppose law to be unkind.

As we come to understand all this, I am sure we shall reach a deeper insight into this question of whether Nature at heart, in the deep meaning of it, in the great outcome of it, in the mighty order that runs through it, is malevolent or benevolent.

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One more thing should be considered, as having important light to shed upon the subject before us. It is the law of progress, or the fact that the world is not finished, but is still in the process of creation.

If we see a house half done we do not wonder at ugly scaffolding standing beside it, and at mortar and stones and lumber scattered about in confusion. We do not say the house is a failure because there is little or no beauty in it in its unfinished state. What is all man's work in the world — all the labor of ten thousand kinds that he is carrying on — but his recognition of the fact that the world is not yet finished, and that his business is to help complete it? In this connection I call to mind that striking and profoundly significant poem of Sam Walter Foss, which he calls "The World-Smiths."

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“What is this iron music  
Whose strains are borne from afar?  
The hammers of the world-smiths  
Are beating out a star.  
They build our old world over,  
Anew its mold is wrought;  
They shape the plastic planet  
To models of their thought.  
This is the iron music  
Whose strains are borne afar;  
The hammers of the world-smiths  
Are beating out a star.

We hear the whirling sawmill  
Within the forest deep;  
The wilderness is clipped like wool,  
The hills are sheared like sheep.  
Down through the fetid fenways  
We hear the road machine;  
The tangled swamps are tonsured,  
The marshes combed and clean.  
We see the sprouting cities  
Loom o'er the prairie's rim,  
And through the inland hilltops  
The ocean navies swim.

Across the trellised landways  
The lifted steamers slide;  
Dry shod beneath the rivers  
The iron stallions glide;  
Beneath the tunneled city  
The lightning chariots flock,  
And back and forth their freight of men  
Shoot like a shuttlecock.

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The moon-led tides are driven back,  
Their waves no more are free;  
And islands rise out of the main,  
And cities from the sea.

Smiths of the star unfinished,  
This is the work for you,  
To hammer down the uneven world —  
And there is much to do.

Scoop down that beetling mountain,  
And raise that bulging cape;  
The world is on your anvil,  
Now smite it into shape.

What is this iron music  
Whose strains are borne afar?  
The hammers of the world-smiths  
Are beating out a star."

G.

No, this world is not yet finished. It is in the process of making. Greater and better things are ahead. Man and God must co-operate to bring them. Man must work with his brain, his hand, his engineering knowledge, his mechanical skill, all the powers that God has given him. And God will work on his part through all his physical forces and all his far-reaching, intricate world-compassing wonderful laws. Not man alone, but man and God, are the world-smiths that are beating out a star.

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But if the earth is unfinished, so too is man, and it is through these very life-experiences of his, some of which are hard and dark, and which he is so quick to call cruel,

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and to point to as evidences of want of kindness on the part of God, that he is being developed and strengthened toward that completeness of manhood which is the goal ever shining before and above him. From the beginning of his career on the earth man has been struggling. Every battle he has fought with the elements, with frost or fire, with river or sea, with wild beasts, with sterile soil, with calamity in any form, has made him stronger. He has risen by overcoming. In those lands where everything has been furnished to his need, and where the prodigality of nature has invited him to ease, he has remained, as a rule, low down. Only in those lands where he has had to wrestle with hardships and dangers has he risen to his best. The very things which he has persisted in regarding as his enemies have turned out to be his truest friends.

Men find it hard to learn that creation is an almost infinitely long process. It has taken millions of years to create a strawberry: why then should we complain if it takes many ages to perfect a world or to build a man. We want things done in a hurry, and we call God cruel because he declines to do things in that way. We are very much like the child that one of our minor poets tells of:

“My little maiden of four years old —  
No myth, but a genuine child is she,  
With her bronze-brown eyes and her curls of gold —  
Came, quite in disgust, one day to me.

Rubbing her shoulder with rosy palm,  
As the loathsome touch seemed yet to thrill her,  
She cries, ‘O, mother, I found on my arm  
A horrible, crawling caterpillar!’

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And with mischievous smile she could scarcely smother,  
Yet a glance in its daring half awed and shy,  
She added, 'While they were about it, mother,  
I wish they'd just finished the butterfly.' ”

We men want God to create the butterfly, without any caterpillar; and often because he refuses to accommodate our whim we call him cruel. But once let us open our eyes to his larger ways and we soon see how shallow are our complaints. We discover that the world is not an evil world, but a good world. It is not blind and purposeless, the theatre of forces that no intelligence guides: but a cosmos of beauty and order and wonder. Even the dark things that appear under its skies, forthwith lose their darkness and begin to shine with a great light as soon as we look earnestly down into their heart; and the seeming discords which jar on us, as we listen more intently to them, turn strangely into harmonies.

\* \* \* \*

One more point needs to be touched. I imagine I hear some one reply to all these considerations which have been set forth, "Yes, I grant their truth in their application to the race, as a race; but, do they apply also to individuals as individuals"?

The inquiry is pertinent. Certainly there are many cases where the individual falls. The race is benefited, but the man goes down. How are we to harmonize this — the perishing of so many individuals — with the idea that over all there is a God of benevolence and love? I grant that here is a difficulty, perhaps the most serious that confronts us in this whole discussion.

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And yet, even upon this I think there is light. But to find it our vision must take in a range larger than the small limits of earth, and this brief earthly life. We must look to that great continuation and completion of our existence which is believed to await men on the other side of what we call death.

We are told that when Goethe was only twelve years old there fell from his lips a sentence which shoots a ray of light through all such questions as these. Said the boy: "Perhaps God sees that no mortal accident can harm an immortal soul." It was only the same thought that had been uttered by Jesus, and with greater or less clearness by all the greatest religious teachers of the world. It was a thought that had been rising to greater and greater fullness and power in the universal heart of humanity for ten thousand years. And what a thought it was, and is! How it lifts every individual of the race above earthquakes and floods and fires, above every possible physical calamity, above fear of death!

Men talk about death as a terrible thing. How do we know that it is a terrible thing? Indeed what reason have we for thinking so?

"What care I  
Though falls the sky,  
And the shrivelled earth to a cinder turn?  
No fires of doom  
Can ever consume  
What never was made or meant to burn."

Why should we imagine that death is a greater event in the sum-total of an immortal career, than is the going

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to sleep at night of a tired child in the sum-total of the child's earthly life? And as to the pain connected with dying (usually there is little pain, especially in connection with sudden deaths; as a rule nature wonderfully anaesthetizes those whom she calls to go) but, as to the pain connected with dying, whatever it may be, especially sudden dying, why should we suppose it any more important, as compared with our whole existence in this world and the next, than is the mental pain of the little child who must go to bed at night, against its will, when the time for bed arrives? Once get a perspective which takes in two worlds, and the shadows which make this world standing alone look so dark pass away as a morning cloud. Ah, the wisdom of the thought so well expressed by the marvelous boy: "Perhaps God sees that no mortal accident can harm an immortal soul."

\* \* \* \*

So then, as the result of our study of what we may call the darker side of nature and human life, or the calamities and disasters of many kinds that befall individual men and nations, I cannot but think that we find ourselves justified, wholly justified, in believing that nature is something other and better than an infinite blind machine, crushing everything, man included, remorselessly in its iron wheels; but that over nature, and at the heart of nature, and as the very meaning of it and of man's life, there is an Infinite Power, an Infinite Purpose and Wisdom, and an Infinite Care, which man may trust, trust perfectly; so that when he (man) has done his part as well as he can in the great partnership that

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exists between himself and the Power that put him here, he has a right to rest and be at peace, his soul comforted and strengthened by such words as those of Socrates: "There can no evil befall a good man whether in this world or after death." Or those of Tennyson:

"Well roars the storm to those who hear  
Thy deeper voice across the storm."

Or those of Lowell:

"And behind the dim unknown  
Standeth God within the shadow  
Keeping watch above His own."

Or those of the Hebrew psalmist:

"God is my refuge and my fortress,  
In Him will I trust."

## VI

ROBERT INGERSOLL'S:

"I THINK IF I HAD BEEN GOD  
I COULD HAVE MADE A BETTER  
WORLD."

"I could make a better world." So I said once, despising God.

I had looked upon the world's poverty and pain, its sickness and death, its vice and crime, and foul debauchery. I had seen little children neglected, starved, stunted, yea, damned in being born: I had beheld the high look of those who toil not, the craven soul of those who labor, the absence of brotherhood upon the earth. I had seen men everywhere mad for money, drunk with selfish pleasure and sham respectability, afraid to face their own conscience in the night.

So I grew angry and declared: "I could make a better world myself." In my hot indignation I said: "I could—I could"—

Then I paused. My towering scorn crumbled into humility.

Now, at length, I see the truth.

I see that God, too, wants a better world—and purposes it. But how is it to come?

It must come by means, by agencies. God has made men to be his helpers. He is opening the eyes of men to see the meannesses, the madnesses, the miseries that exist, and filling them with longings for better things. He is causing them to hate the hateful, to be pained at injustice, to be ashamed of their brothers' poverty, to be stirred with mighty desires to work with him to redeem the world from its evil and suffering, and to fill it with truth and love and good. Thus through men God will create—is creating—a better world.

And as I listen, no longer haughty, but humble, lo! I hear God say to me: "Go thou, do thy part; help me to make a better world; this is my plan."

So I despise God no longer. But joining hands with him, I begin to build.

*Harvey D. Brown.*

## VI

### ROBERT INGERSOLL'S:

**"I THINK IF I HAD BEEN GOD  
I COULD HAVE MADE A BETTER  
WORLD."**

MR. INGERSOLL, the brilliant agnostic, who by his striking and iconoclastic oratory so startled the complacent "orthodoxies" of the last decades of the nineteenth century, unquestionably said many things that were true and that the religious world needed to learn. This to-day is very plain. But is it not also plain that he said not a few things which glittered and were thought by many at the time to be gold, which examination has shown to be iron pyrites or "fool's gold"; and is not his saying, "I think if I had been God I could have made a better world," one of these?

The first time that I met the utterance I heard it from Mr. Ingersoll's own lips. The circumstances were as follows. In one of his lectures delivered to a great audience, he was speaking of what he considered the imperfections of nature and urging these as a reason why we cannot affirm the existence of a Creator, or at least a Creator possessing supreme wisdom and goodness. To illustrate his argument he said that the question had often been asked him whether he thought he himself could have made a better world if he had had the task. He answered that he thought he could. When asked

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how, or in what respect better, he replied that for one thing he would have made "health catching instead of disease."

Since then I have seen this saying quoted many times by persons who seemed to regard it as a very keen, profound and unanswerable impeachment of the wisdom and beneficence of nature, or in other words, of God as the author of nature.

Well, is the utterance a profound or convincing one? Does it embody an impeachment of either the wisdom or goodness of the Creator? Does not a little deeper looking, a little looking below the mere surface of things, show that *health is catching — as catching as disease*, and actually *more so* if we consider health (as we ought) in the *large sense of the word* — if we regard it as embracing physical health, mental health and moral health? Is it not *because* this is *true* — is it not *because* the health forces of the world are distinctly stronger, both more catching and more enduring than the disease forces (the life forces than the death forces, the forces that work for good than those that work for evil) — that the world exists at all?

\* \* \* \*

In the Gospel of Luke (VI:19) we find a very suggestive utterance concerning Jesus. It reads: "The whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went out virtue from him, and he healed them all."

Passing by any thought about miraculous physical healing, I wish to suggest that we seem to have here an intimation of a great law — the law that wherever virtue, wherever good of any kind exists, it exists as an *active principle*. It is positive, not negative; alive, not

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dead. Its nature is to persist, to communicate itself, to spread, to propagate its kind. Is it not a law everywhere operative in human life, and in all other life, that whenever health and disease meet, whether in the realm of the physical, the intellectual or the moral, health has far greater catching and persisting power than has disease, and that in this fact lies all the hope of mankind?

Surely it takes only a little thinking to make plain that if in this world disease and not health were pre-eminently the contagious thing, the self-propagating and persisting thing, the order of nature in the midst of which we are and of which we form a part, would be rotten, would be one of steady and inevitable degeneration and death. If in this universe disease were the deepest law, then disintegration would be the deepest law. But as already stated, such a universe could not endure. By its own inherent force of dissolution it would speedily decay and perish. So soon as created its disintegration would begin. That is to say, the disease, the evil, the disintegrating forces inherent in it would at once enter upon their career of catching, spreading, communicating themselves, propagating their own kind, unchecked by any equally strong forces of health and life and good, and therefore it would only be a question of time, and very short time, when the disease would culminate in death, and the destruction would be complete and universal.

Thus if Mr. Ingersoll had thought a little more deeply he would have seen that a world in which disease, in the large sense of the word, should be catching and health not, would be an impossibility.



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Especially does such a theory of things as this of Mr. Ingersoll contradict the law of Evolution — a law in which he himself claimed strongly to believe. Evolution says that from the beginning there has been progress; things have been growing better in the world, not worse; the tendency has been toward integration, not disintegration.

Of course this means that the health forces and life forces have been the more powerful and dominant. This is why life has not only held its own but has steadily gained; this is the reason why there has been advance; this is why from a low condition the world has steadily risen until at last it has reached what it is today. Thus we see that the very meaning of Evolution is that at the heart of things in the universe there is soundness; there is integrity; there is health, not disease; there is life, not death. Else the first conditions of Evolution would be absent. The progress upward could never even have begun, and certainly it could not have persisted.

\* \* \* \*

But if Mr. Ingersoll's position conflicts with the doctrine of Evolution, of which he was so strong an advocate, it harmonizes exactly with the theological doctrine of Calvinism, of which he was so determined an opponent.

This is very curious. Mr. Ingersoll really puts himself exactly on the same ground with John Calvin and the very extremist and darkest form of Calvinistic orthodoxy. The very fundamental postulate of Calvinism is that disease and not health is dominant in

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nature and man. Exactly that is the meaning of the doctrines of the fall of the race, the total depravity of man and the redemptive scheme. There was a time, says Calvinism, when life was supreme, and when health ran bounding through the veins of the world. That was while earth was yet Eden. But alas! Eve,

“Her rash hand in evil hour  
Forth-reaching to the fruit, did pluck and eat.  
Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat,  
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,  
That all was lost.”

Briars and thorns sprang from the ground; man was doomed to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow; death appeared in the world to curse and smite all living things. From that time on, it was disease and not health that ran through the veins of both man and nature.

As the Calvinistic creeds say, “Original Sin is no trivial corruption, but is so profound a corruption as to leave nothing sound. Nothing uncorrupt in the body or soul of man, or in his mental or bodily powers.”\*

“Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. . . . They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation,

\* “Formula of Concord.” Art. I. Sec. 3.

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. . . whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil.”\*

Nor does the disease end with this world. It pours its terrible consequences on into the next. To quote the Creeds again: “All mankind, by their fall . . . are under God’s wrath and curse, and so liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.”†

Here we have, full-fledged, the doctrine that disease, not health, evil, not good, death, not life, are the catching, self-propagating, dominant forces in man’s life, and in nature.

Thus we see the strange phenomenon of the extreme sceptic and the extreme Calvinist joining hands in support of what is fundamentally the same dark philosophy of pessimism, and despair for man and the world.

But both are wrong. The science, the larger knowledge, the more reasonable and the profounder thinking of our time, deny this whole dismal philosophy. It is as superficial and unscientific as it is heart-breaking.

Modern knowledge affirms in clearest tones that the world has never suffered ruin, that man is a rising not a fallen being, that human nature is not fundamentally evil but only incomplete, that health, not disease; forces which work for construction, not destruction; for progress and life, not for decay and death; for man’s salvation and not for his ruin; these are the deepest moving and guiding forces of the universe.

\* Presbyterian Confession of Faith, pp. 38-40.

† Westminster Shorter Catechism. Answer to question 19.

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Let me not be misunderstood. I do not say there is no contagion of disease in the world. I do not say there is no contagion of evil. I do not say there is no contagion of death. Such contagion is a stern and terrible fact which we cannot ignore. But what I say is, that side by side with it is another force of an opposite character, which is deeper, more widespread and more powerful.

\* \* \* \*

Let me notice two or three facts regarding contagious physical diseases.

Most of us have much dread of such diseases. And yet, do we realize how few they are in number? I know there is some difference of opinion here. Some authorities contend that certain diseases are contagious which others believe are not. But even granting the widest claim, it still remains true that diseases which are catching are comparatively few.

Still further, against these diseases, as against all others, the life forces of the victim attacked stoutly battle, and in a large percentage of cases — perhaps in between 80 and 90 per cent — these life forces are strong enough to beat off the invader, and win the victory for life and health — so powerfully is nature herself on the side of health.

We talk about our medicines curing disease. But we are quite mistaken. All that the most skillful physicians and the best nurses can do is to clear the way for a free and unhindered activity of the recuperative powers of the human system itself — as the old Latins used to call it, the *vis medicatrix naturae*, the healing power of

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nature. It is this, not our medicines, that does the good work.

In the case of wounds too, the healing comes from nature. Nature is not hostile to the wounded man; she is not even indifferent; she is positively, actively, and in most cases powerfully sympathetic and helpful. No sooner does the wound occur than nature turns all the energies of the human system to the task of healing it. If the wound is severe nature even suspends or greatly lessens nearly all the other activities of the system in order to have the more to concentrate on the healing of the wound. So much is nature the friend of life and health, and the enemy of disease and death.

\* \* \* \*

I think we may get a little light upon the question whether health or disease in the large sense of the word, is the more catching; that is, whether the things that help man or the things that hurt him, are the more powerful, the more endowed with ability to propagate themselves in the world, by noticing the natural dissemination of plant life over the surface of the earth.

If I were to ask a company of farmers, which are the more catching, that is, which propagate and disseminate themselves the more successfully, good plants or bad, vegetable growths that are useful to men or those that are harmful, no doubt many would answer, the bad, those that are harmful. And in proof they would point me to the thistle, the dandelion, the burdock, the daisy, the ragweed, and many another weed pest.

But really would those who answered thus be right? What are weeds? A very wise man has said, Weeds are

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simply plants whose virtues have not yet been discovered. Most of the plants that are now most useful and most prized were once regarded as weeds. Men had not yet found out their virtues. Can we doubt that many plants which to-day we call weeds will one day be highly prized?

Still farther. Even if we draw the line between plants that are bad and plants that are useful where most men draw it to-day, still are we quite sure that an examination of the world as a whole would show the bad to be the more catching, and the more prolific? I think not. Take the world over, what is so universal as grass? That is, what is so widely catching, what so universally and generously propagates itself, as grass? See the vast prairies of North America, the vast pampas of South America, the pastures and meadows of Europe, the steppes and plains of Eastern Russia and Central Asia! Who planted or sowed the grass that covers these? Did man? Nature did it, by giving this tiny but invaluable plant means of spreading from the roots, but especially means of sowing itself broadcast far and wide by means of winged seeds. Thus nature has turned what would otherwise be in large part a waste world, into a world rich with verdure for the sustenance of countless millions of cattle and sheep and other animals, and for the support of man.

And the trees of all the woods and forests of the world too — who planted them? Man did not. Nature did. Trees are “catching,” and so they have planted themselves all up and down the world, to the inestimable advantage of man.

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Indeed without grass and trees the earth would not have become habitable by human beings, and man could not have made his appearance on the planet.

Do not these two things alone, grass and trees, both of which have taken possession of the surface of the earth by the "catching" process, a hundred times over make good to man the little harm that comes to him from the few catching so-called "weeds" or "bad" plants that annoy him?

These are a few illustrations of the useful or confessedly good things in the vegetable world that are catching. I am afraid it is not altogether creditable to us that we are so quick to see the bad catching things, and not the good.

\* \* \* \*

But I am dwelling too long upon physical matters. The most important application of my thought is to be found in the intellectual and especially the moral realms. Here the contagiousness of good is particularly conspicuous.

For example: Truth is catching. Once get truth conceived in some one mind, and clearly uttered, and it will take care of itself. Its life is indestructible. Though the whole world be against it, that signifies nothing. Time is nothing; opposition is nothing. It can wait. A day with it is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day; but sooner or later it will conquer. The first utterer of a great truth may wait a century or a millennium for a disciple. No matter, the disciple will come; then the second, the third, the thousandth, the millionth, and the victory is won. Truth is a divine

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seed, which, because it is of God and has life in itself, will catch, and catch, and spread, and make its way, until it conquers all things.

Ten thousand illustrations of this might easily be pointed out in connection with man's history. Indeed his whole progress in thought and knowledge from the first until now has been little else than a continued illustration of it. As fast as by his experience he has found out any new truth it has become a fruitful seed. Little by little it has spread. Mistakes and errors have spread by its side. But these had no permanent life in them because they were errors. In the struggle for existence they perished; but it endured. So it will always be.

Turn now from Truth to Beauty. Beauty is as catching as Truth. As soon as in the upward development of the race some son of man with finer powers than his fellows had succeeded in moulding a vase, or an urn, or a pitcher of more graceful form than had before been seen, a seed of beauty was planted on the earth which could no more fail to catch, that is to grow and to multiply, than the sun could fail to shine.

If, as the poet Keats sings, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever," no less is it a self-propagating force forever.

Madonnas did not cease to be painted when Raphael died. His genius and inspiration have caught, have communicated themselves as a fine contagion to all the ages since; and thus we see something of his power in a hundred other painters.

But if truth and beauty are catching, still more so is

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Goodness. A supreme illustration of this we find in Jesus. What has caused the great teacher of Nazareth to be so influential in the world? Many causes have combined; but beyond a doubt that, without which all others would have failed, is the simple nobleness of his character. This from the beginning has drawn to him all eyes. And as men have seen they have loved, and as they have loved the desire has grown in their hearts for a like purity and worth. Thus has the power of his virtue increased; thus has the contagion of his moral health spread over the earth until it has given health and life to millions.

\* \* \* \*

It becomes increasingly clear with every added century that the greatest power that has ever been discovered, or in the nature of case ever can be, for the moral elevation of the race, is just this power which we find in so marked a degree in Jesus, and which we discover to a greater or less extent also in all good men and women — this power of personal moral influence — the catching, self-communicating power of virtue. We all know something of those institutions called Social Settlements which within a few years have been planted in many of our large cities. The aim in view is to plant moral green spots — oases, health centers — in the midst of the worst sections of great cities, so as to give to the degraded populations of those sections, the inestimable benefit of close contact with intelligence and virtue — intelligence and virtue that are modest and fraternal and sympathetic, and desirous not of being ministered unto, but of ministering. The results are

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proving everywhere most excellent. The workers in these settlements become teachers, helpers, friends, inspirers, very truly saviors, to the people around them, — virtue goes out from them to those whom they touch as it is said to have gone out from Jesus. The settlements become centers of light in the midst of the surrounding darkness; centers of virtue, and of cleaner, sweeter and better living to hundreds and thousands.

All our schools should be health centers — centers for the planned and systematic propagation of every kind of health, physical, mental and moral, among the children and youth of the land.

The great value of churches in all our communities is as moral health centers — places from which moral health may catch and spread under the powerful influences of religion.

The true home is a health center. Homes that are good and pure, and full of love and wisdom, operate with a power that is almost omnipotent to heal the wounds and diseases of the world — to spread good influences everywhere in society by the catching process. Every individual life ought to be a health center. Every bad person sends out moral disease all around him. Every good person rays out health.

What an incentive is this to us all to live our best, that thus what is good in us may catch and catch and catch, and become a contagion of blessing, a propagation of sweetness and light and healing to men wherever we go and wherever we are!

How much deeper into the heart of things did James Russell Lowell see than Mr. Ingersoll. Lowell per-

## BECAUSE MEN ARE NOT STONES

ceived that evil is evanescent, and that only good is permanent. In his "Prometheus" we find him writing with profound insight:

"Evil springs up and flowers and bears no seed,  
And feeds the green earth with its swift decay.  
But good, once put in action or in thought,  
Like a strong oak, doth from its boughs shed down  
The ripe germs of a forest."

Again in his "Elegy on the Death of Channing" with splendid inspiration he sings:

"No power can die that ever wrought for truth;  
Thereby a law of Nature it became,  
And lives unwithered in its sinewy youth,  
When he who called it forth is but a name.  
Men slay the prophets: fagot, rack and cross  
Make up the groaning record of the past;  
But Evil's triumphs are her endless loss,  
And sovereign Beauty wins the Soul at last."

How much deeper did Bryant see than Ingersoll! We find him writing the immortal words:

"Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,  
The eternal years of God are hers;  
But error, wounded writhes in pain,  
And dies among her worshipers."

\* \* \* \*

In conclusion. If what has been said in the preceding pages is true, three things appear to be clear.

One is that the final victory in this world is to be with good, and not with evil. This may well give to all lovers of their kind great courage and hope.

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The second is, that because there can be no eternal evil, therefore there can be no eternal hell. The superior contagiousness of good over evil ensures that evil will sometime come to an end. Pain and suffering there may be, probably must be, on the other side of the grave, until evil has experienced its just retribution and retribution has taught men its lessons. But sooner or later love will conquer hate and good will conquer evil, and so hell must come to an end.

The third is, that the truest way for us all to help in improving the world is to make of ourselves centers of health. We must ourselves become the wisest, kindest, purest, strongest, noblest persons we can. Then the health that is in us will catch. Out from us to all who meet us, to all who know us, will go forth morally transforming, uplifting, life-giving power.

If our great humanity is ever to be saved, it will not be by theological schemes, or ecclesiastical rites, or any such thing. It will be by love, it will be by goodness propagating itself. It will be by men and women filled with the Christ-spirit, carrying the splendid contagion of their honor, their integrity, their goodness, into business, into society, into public life, into the dark places of the earth, and there wooing, winning, lifting their fellows by the power of their virtue, their sympathy, their love, their honor and their worth, to higher and better lives. This is the scientific method, this is the Christ method, by which this world of ours with its sin and evil, its suffering and pain, is to be transformed slowly but surely into God's Kingdom of justice and love.



VII

GOD WHO KNOWS AND CARES

“Speak to him, thou, for he hears, and  
Spirit with spirit can meet,—  
Closer is he than breathing, and  
Nearer than hands and feet.”

*Alfred Tennyson.*

“Are men better than sheep and goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands in prayer  
Both for themselves and those that call them friend?  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”

*Alfred Tennyson.*

“O Love that will not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
That in thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.”

*George Matheson.*

## VII

### GOD WHO KNOWS AND CARES

WE live in an age of science and reason. We live in an age when it is well understood that the processes of nature go on according to law. In such an age is there any legitimate place for prayer, for worship, for the thought of intercourse between man and God?

There are some who answer: No.

There are persons, persons of intelligence, who would cast out all prayer, all worship, as a superstition, a wholly irrational and foolish thing. Others would not entirely reject prayer, but would limit it to meditation and aspiration — condemning everything beyond these. Still others — and these are many — are in uncertainty and confusion of mind about the whole matter, not knowing what to believe.

Under such circumstances it is easy to see that the need is great for a candid and careful study of the subject, that we may find out where there is firm ground on which to stand.

One thing becomes clear as soon as we begin really to think on the subject at all; and that is, that among thoughtful men, who believe in science and a world governed by law, many of those ideas of prayer which came into existence in ancient times, before the uniformity of nature's operations was found out, and while

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yet God was believed to rule the world in purely arbitrary ways, must be revised. In place of these necessarily more or less crude and imperfect conceptions of the nature and functions of prayer, it is important that we should get others more in harmony with God's real method of governing the universe, and with all the facts of nature.

Nor need we fear. When once men come to understand what true prayer is, and what it is not; in other words, when once they adjust their religious thinking to the enlarged knowledge of the modern world, I do not, for one, see any grounds for believing that the necessary or the legitimate result is to weaken faith in prayer. Rather do I believe that never did the reasonableness, the value and the need of true prayer more clearly appear, than under the light of the highest intelligence and the profoundest thinking of our time.

Let me give reasons for so believing.

Perhaps I can best do this by beginning with the negative side of the subject, and describing briefly the kinds of prayer which I do not believe in, because modern thought seems to me to have outgrown them. This done, I shall be the better ready to take up the positive side, pointing out what kinds of prayer I do believe in, and why.

\* \* \* \*

1. To proceed, then, I do not believe in any prayer whose object, or any part of whose object, is to give God information, to enlighten him regarding our wants, or to instruct him as to the best way of carrying on the affairs of the world. Yet there are many prayers offered

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which seem to have just this object in view. Perhaps the best comments to make on such prayers are those searching questions of the prophet Isaiah:

“Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord,  
Or being his counsellor hath taught him?  
With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him,  
And taught him in the path of judgment,  
And gave him knowledge,  
And showed him the way of understanding?”

If any of us are wiser than God, we may, perhaps, with some reason indulge in this kind of prayer. If not, it is plain that the sooner we dispense with it the better.

2. Again, I do not believe in any prayer that is offered as in any sense a substitute for work. That is to say, I do not believe in the lazy asking of God to do for us what we ought to do for ourselves.

Once when they were on a journey in the desert, a companion of Mohammed said to the prophet, as they stopped at night: “I will not tie my camel, but will commit him to God.” Replied the prophet: “Tie thy camel, and then commit him to God.”

That was the true view of prayer. God is not our drudge. Prayer is not power whereby we can secure the boon of idleness for ourselves. To ask God to do for us what we ought to do for ourselves is not to honor but to insult him.

3. Further, I do not believe in any prayer or invocation or offering or other transaction with God, the object of which is to get God in any sense into human power, or to compel him by the use of forms, or rites,

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or a magic name, or by importunity, to do what he does not wish to do.

The Brahmins of India believe that by practicing austerities, and repeating prayers and sacred words from the Vedas, and by offering sacrifices, one can get the gods to almost any extent into one's power, and compel them to do one's bidding. There is a somewhat similar notion regarding prayer and sacraments and sacred rights, found widely among Christian peoples — the notion that a sort of mystical charm resides in these which will bring supernatural results to the one who is able to avail himself of it. Thus many priests claim that by the use of certain forms and prayers they can change bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ; and many a simple-minded woman believes that the effect of counting her beads so many times is to give her so many merits up in heaven; and not a few earnest and devout but short-sighted and credulous women and men believe that by pleading the magical merits of Christ's name they may always, when they need, obtain coal and potatoes and bread.

Now I say, this idea of prayer, which makes it a sort of hand whereby we may reach up and lay hold upon certain hidden potencies of divine magic, to use them for our selfish advantage, I do not believe in. It seems to me a degradation of prayer to conceive of it in such a light. These things all have their place in legends and in the superstitions of the Middle Ages; but they do not have any proper place in the religion of our enlightened age. We want truth, not dreams; realities, not credulities.

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4. Again, I do not believe in any theory of prayer that expects God to set aside wise laws, by which he regulates the affairs of the universe, to accommodate men's short-sighted notions or selfish desires.

It is easy to see that if God allowed one man, or set of men, to have rain for their mere praying for it, and others dry weather for their praying for that; and an army to secure victory by praying for victory; and a farmer to get good crops by praying for them; and a merchant to grow rich by praying for wealth; and the sick man to recover by praying for health; and the living to be delivered from death by so praying, and so on, the result would be simply to turn this world from a law-governed world into one not governed at all; indeed, it would be to plunge the world at once from order into chaos and ruin. Certainly, I, for one, cannot believe that the growing intelligence of the world will accept any theory of prayer that means this or anything like this. I cannot believe in any prayer that interferes with a law-governed universe, or that does not rise to the height of seeing that law itself is only another name for God's rectitude, and fidelity, and goodness and love.

\* \* \* \*

So much, then, for the negative side of my thought, or the kinds of prayer that I am not able to accept. I come now to the positive — the kinds of prayer that I believe to be wholly justified by modern knowledge, as well as by the deepest intuitions and needs of the human soul.

What ought we to mean by the word "prayer?"

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Should we mean merely petition, merely asking for things? That is perhaps what is oftenest meant; but I think it is much too narrow a signification. Prayer, understood in the large way in which it ought to be understood, I am sure should include a great deal besides petition. Indeed, so far is petition from being all of prayer, that it is a question if it be even the most important part.

Certain it is, that as prayer rises to its best, and as men rise to their best, so that prayer becomes to them more and more a habitual attitude of mind, the petition element tends to become less prominent, and other elements come forward to take its place. It is easy to have prayer, and prayer that is very noble, very sweet, very profound in its sincerity, and very helpful, without petition at all. For example, how could the spirit of prayer be more perfectly breathed than in the following poetical lines?

“O Love Divine, of all that is  
    The sweetest and the best!  
Fain would I come and rest to-day  
    Upon thy faithful breast;  
And yet the spirit in my heart  
    Says, ‘Wherefor should I pray  
That thou should’st seek me with thy love,  
    Since thou dost seek alway?’

“I would not have thee otherwise  
    Than what thou still must be;  
Yea, thou art God, and what thou art  
    Is ever best for me.

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And so, for all my sighs, my heart  
Doth sing itself to rest,  
O Love Divine, most far and near,  
Upon thy faithful breast."

Here is prayer, perhaps as pure and devout and lofty as the soul can know; and yet it is so far from being made up of petition, that it does not even include petition. It is simply a prayer of love, adoration, gratitude, trust. Let no one misunderstand me as saying that I think petition is not proper. Made for right objects, and in a right spirit, I think it is proper, wholly rational and important. But it is not an essential in prayer.

\* \* \* \*

When I say I believe in prayer, I mean I believe in at least five things, as all included in prayer, in the large and full sense of that word, outside of and besides petition. Let me name them:

1. I believe in thankfulness or gratitude to the Infinite Source of all good — to the Giver of my life and of all the blessings that make my life rich, to the Giver of my dear ones, and all the good that has come to them. And why should I not be thus grateful? I should think myself less than a man if I were not grateful to my fellows for their kindnesses to me. Then am I not less than a man if I do not teach myself to be grateful to the greatest Benefactor I have? Thus I think it is easy to see that the prayer of gratitude — the prayer which is the sincere utterance of a thankful heart — is natural, is reasonable, is in every way most fitting.

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2. Another kind of prayer which seems to me wholly rational, is the prayer of adoration, reverence, awe, worship, in the presence of the great manifestations of God's power and wisdom and grandeur in Nature. It is the feeling which comes over me when I stand in the presence of Niagara, of the sea, of the starry heavens at night. It is the same feeling which the ancient Psalmist had when he exclaimed reverently:

“The heavens declare the glory of God  
And the firmament sheweth his handiwork.  
Day unto day uttereth speech,  
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.

“O Lord, how manifold are thy works,  
In wisdom hast thou made them all.”

I see not how one can go through this marvelous world without such feelings coming to him by day and by night, ten thousand times over. And I can conceive of nothing more natural or right than that these feelings, when they come, should seek expression, as they have ever done, in the language of adoration and worship.

3. Again, akin to the feeling of adoration in the presence of Nature, is what we may call the soul's communion with Nature. Who has not had such communion, in the fields, in the woods, in the mountains, in the gathering twilight alone, in the still midnight? What was that communion? It was not intercourse with the mere matter around, regarded as unintelligent and dead. It was communion with Nature alive, and penetrated with a marvelous intelligence. It was communion with the Soul of Nature, with that Universal

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Spirit whose wonderful and ever-changing time-garment Nature is. It was communion with God in Nature.

Nor is man's communion with God awakened by external nature alone. It may be awakened by man. He who finds the deepest that is in his brother finds God. He who journeys inward to the deepest sanctities of his own soul, finds God. Here wait for us all, communings as sweet and holy as we can know in this world.

Now all this comes within the province of prayer, rightly understood. All this communion of the soul with its own deeper self, that is, with the God within; and all this communion of the soul with external nature — that is, with the God without, is worship — is prayer. Surely we should always teach ourselves to think of prayer as including all this. And if we do, it will help us to see the grounds for prayer; the reasonableness of prayer; for surely all this is reasonable if any action of the soul can be reasonable.

4. Still further, prayer means aspiration. It means a vision of the unattained, and a desire to reach it. It means a recognition of the ideal shining above one, and a longing to make it one's own. "Be ye perfect," and Jesus, "even as your Father in Heaven is perfect."

To look upward and see the divine perfection, and to feel the divineness of it, and to press toward it, is the noblest of prayers. Yes, and the most reasonable; for what can be so reasonable as to desire and to strive for the best?

5. One more kind of prayer there is, before we reach petition. It is the prayer of trust; trust of ourselves and all our interests in the hands of the Infinite Wisdom

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and Care that is over us; trust of our dear ones in the keeping of One who must love them even more than we do; trust of the world in the hands of him who made it — sure that he means it well, and that somehow and somewhere he will make “good to be the final goal of ill.”

The value, the preciousness of such a trust, when it exists in the human soul, money cannot measure; and wherever it is found nothing is more natural than for it to seek expression.

\* \* \* \*

I trust it is now plain how large and many-sided and rich a thing is prayer, entirely aside from petition. All the realms of thankfulness, of reverence, of communion, of aspiration and of trust are open to it, and would be even if one never asked anything at all. And how beautiful and glorious are these realms! How great is the loss suffered by all those who do not repair thither often, to breathe their diviner air!

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?”

“Devoutly look, and nought but wonders shall pass by thee;  
Devoutly read, and then all books shall edify thee;  
Devoutly speak, and men devoutly listen to thee;  
Devoutly act, and then the strength of God acts through thee.”

I come now to petition — that kind of prayer which asks for something. It is here that most men find their greatest difficulty in making prayer seem reasonable. Some say, Why ask for anything? Will not God give

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what he wants us to have, anyway, whether we ask or not? Others say, he cannot give anything, no matter how much we ask him, because he rules by law; therefore why go through the farce of asking?

Let us see if we can find any light upon these difficulties.

\* \* \* \*

There are two kinds of things that may be asked for in prayer. One is temporal or physical good; the other is spiritual good. Let us look first at the spiritual, concerning which the difficulties are least.

Indeed, I think there are no difficulties here at all. Such as there seem to be, arise from surface-looking. The truth is, in spiritual things asking and receiving are not different and opposite; they are the same. Really to ask is to begin to receive. When we ask God for any physical good, without putting forth physical effort to obtain it, we are asking him to violate his physical laws to accommodate our wish. But, when we ask for spiritual good, there is no violation of law involved. For it is the law of our being that the first step toward receiving spiritual good must be desire for such good. We must open our minds and hearts that it may come in. What is the way to get love, or purity of heart, or unselfishness, or sympathy for others, or a forgiving spirit, or any other grace of the soul? The first step must be consciousness of our lack, and the next must be desire. But this is just what prayer is. It is the mind concentrating its attention upon, and reaching earnestly after, the things that it feels the lack of, the things that are above it. Thus praying for spiritual good is not

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contrary to law; it is putting ourselves into harmony with law. It is availing ourselves of the power of spiritual law to reach the spiritual ends we desire.

Surely, therefore, we may look upon prayer for spiritual blessings as not only useful, but as something wholly reasonable and right and in the line of our spirit's normal activities and needs. To forbid such prayer is to put the soul in chains. It is to forbid it to be free. It is to rob it of its birthright. It is to prevent its obeying the law of its being. It is like forbidding the bird to sing, or the flower to reach toward the light, or the babe to pillow its head upon its mother's breast.

\* \* \* \*

We come now to the problem where the real difficulty lies. May we pray for physical good? Is such asking reasonable?

To these questions, I answer: If we pray for physical things with any idea that our prayer can take the place of physical labor, we shall certainly find that we are making a mistake. The prayer for a harvest, that God answers, is the prayer of the hand which sows the grain and cares for it, and reaps it when it is ripe. The prayer of the sailor for safety, that God answers, is the prayer of the clear head and the skillful hand in managing his ship. Any prayer of words, or even of good desires and longings that is substituted in the place of these prayers of the clear head and the skillful, patient hand, will prove disastrous.

However, this is not saying that prayer of the heart may not go with the prayers of the head and hand; for,

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as a fact, earnest heart-prayer often has great power to make the brain more alert and the hand more strong and steady.

If I pray for physical good, expecting that God will miraculously change wise and beneficent laws for the sake of answering my prayer; or, if I pray for such good, and lazily rely upon my prayer instead of upon the labor I ought to perform, then I break God's law by my conduct, and my prayer is an evil. But if laboring faithfully with my hand, I accompany my toil with a sincere prayer of the heart, and always in submission to the Will and the Wisdom that is higher than my own, then I see not why I am doing a wrong, or even an irrational thing, by my praying. Certain it is that if I pray sincerely it will be likely to deepen my earnestness and my patience in my work. Certain it is also that in all my work I am not alone. I am a partner with God; he must make the wind blow that is to fill my sails, I cannot do it; he must make the seed grow that I plant, I cannot impart to it life. It does not seem an unfitting thing, therefore, that by my prayer I should reverently recognize this divine partnership upon which I am so wholly dependent.

Some one inquires: May the sick pray for health? I answer, Why not? Certain it is that the mind has great power over the body. Prayer is a mighty invigorator of the human spirit; why may it not also, through the spirit, invigorate the physical organism which is the servant of the spirit? It seems to be very significant that Jesus was a healer of men's bodies as well as their souls. Science is teaching us that physical health is

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more dependent upon mental health than the world has known.

And yet, man's physical nature has its laws and its sanctities which must not be violated. The true prayer for health must include the doing of those things which in God's wise order promote health. If we trample on the laws of health, if we abuse our bodies, neglect sanitation, eat impure food, drink impure water, deprive ourselves of pure air, and fail to make use of medical and surgical knowledge and skill in times of need, and then think to evade the consequences of our ignorance and folly by prayer, we only mock God. What God by the very constitution of our nature invites us to do is, while obeying sacredly all his holy laws written in our bodies, to remember that we are more than bodies, that we are living souls inhabiting bodies, and having at our command mighty spiritual forces which we may summon for the invigoration of our bodies. The spiritual forces have their source in God. By prayer, by personal contact of the human spirit with the Divine Spirit, we may lay hold of these forces and make them effective.

Some one asks: May we pray for such things as our own safety or the safety of others in times of danger? I reply: It seems to me that this depends upon two things — first, upon whether we ourselves are doing all we can to avert the danger, and, second, upon the spirit in which we pray. Prayer at such a time seems both reasonable and right, as well as useful, if only we pray as did Jesus at a similar crisis, in the filial spirit, recogniz-

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ing the larger wisdom than our own, and subordinating our wish to that.

Said Jesus in his time of extremity: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." That was true prayer. Such prayer we cannot but believe God welcomes. And certainly such prayer mightily steadies and girds the one who offers it. Having prayed in that spirit, even if the blow he dreads falls upon him, he will be the better prepared to meet it; for no resource that man has ever found in sorrow, disaster, or bereavement, is equal to that which he finds in God.

\* \* \* \*

Perhaps my thought about prayer may be summed up in this way: We are all, as I believe, the children of an Infinite Love and Care. We are not here because of our planning. We did not create the world in which we live; we cannot sustain it for a moment of time. We did not create ourselves. We cannot furnish ourselves with a morsel of food or a breath of air except as we get it from a Source beyond and above ourselves. Our little intelligences are, as it were, candles lighted from the Great Intelligence that shines through all the ordered wisdom of the worlds. Our hearts' affections must have come from an Infinite Love-Fountain.

Does it not seem fitting, then, that we should recognize the Source from which we and all our blessings have come? Is it not fitting that we should desire to know and return the Father-love, that has given us all? Is it not right that in our weakness we should seek help from him who is Infinite Strength?

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I take it that something like this is what all true prayer means. If this is its meaning, certainly I for one cannot conceive anything more reasonable, or more beautiful, or more deeply due from man to his Creator and the Author of all good, or more deeply useful to himself, than prayer.

Our life-forces, both of body and spirit, tend ever to run low. God is the Life-Fountain, from whose infinite fullness we are constantly invited to draw renewal of life. How? Through faith and prayer.

We are none of us so wise but that we need a Divine Hand to lead us on our way. Prayer gives us the conscious grasp of such a hand.

We are none of us living lives so worthy but that we need to hear every day a Divine Voice calling us to come up higher. Prayer opens the soul's ears to such a voice.

“A tender child of summers three,  
Seeking her little bed at night,  
Paused on the dark stair timidly,  
‘O mother! take my hand,’ said she,  
‘And then the dark will all be light.’

We older children grope our way  
From dark behind to dark before;  
And only when our hands we lay  
Dear Lord, in thine, the night is day,  
And there is darkness nevermore.”

If any of us have foolish prejudices against prayer, caused by misunderstandings of what prayer really is, let us put prejudice aside. Let us look deeper. Let us learn the meaning of Archbishop Trench’s lines:

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“Lord, what a change within us one short hour  
Spent in thy presence can avail to make!  
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take!  
What parched ground refresh as with a shower!

We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!  
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,  
Or others — that we are not always strong;  
That we are ever overborne with care,  
That we should ever weak or heartless be,  
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,  
And joy and strength and courage are with thee?”

If any of us are indifferent to prayer, let us put away our indifference. Let us learn how sane a thing prayer is, as well as how sweet, how blessed and how life-giving.

And let us learn that it is for us all — the young man in his strength, or his temptation; the old man in his age; the mother in her anxieties; the child in his joy. Let us learn that it is not for the church alone, but for home as well, and for all life. Above all, let us learn that it is for the secret hour, when none is present but ourselves and God.



VIII

**WORKING WITH GOD**

“We are laborers together with God.”

*Paul.*

“And the Lord God whispered and said to me,  
‘These things shall be, these things shall be;  
Nor help shall come from the scarlet skies  
Till the people rise!  
Till the people rise, my arm is weak.’

‘Thy people have travailed much!’ I cried.  
‘I travail even as they,’ God sighed.  
‘I am the Pang of their discontent,  
The Passion of their long lament —  
I am the Purpose of their pain,  
I writhe beneath their chain.’

‘My people are strong,’ God whispered me,  
‘Broad as the land, great as the sea;  
They will tower tall as the tallest skies,  
When they dare to rise.’”

*Angela Morgan.*

“Creation’s Lord, we give thee thanks  
That this thy world is incomplete;  
That battle calls our marshalled ranks,  
That work awaits our hands and feet;

That thou hast not yet finished man,  
That we are in the making still,—  
As friends who share the Maker’s plan,  
As sons who know the Father’s will.”

*William DeWitt Hyde.*

## VIII

### WORKING WITH GOD

THE central thought of this chapter, namely, that of co-operation between God and men, has been briefly touched upon in certain preceding pages. But that does not seem to the writer in any way to make superfluous or unnecessary its fuller and almost wholly different treatment in the present chapter.

All man's productive work in this world is a partnership with nature, that is, with God. Man by himself can do nothing. He cannot make a seed grow or a bud start. Tilling soil would be an utterly useless thing for him were there not a Power greater than himself that takes the seed he sows, mothers it there in the dark ground, mysteriously imparts life to it, sets it doing that strange thing which we call growing, keeps watch and ward over it while he wakes and while he sleeps, until from seed it becomes plant, and as plant passes through all stages of its wonderful life to fruit-bearing in the autumn.

Jesus said, "A sower went forth to sow." It was only another way of saying, "A man went forth to work with God."

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It is one of the great truths that modern science is bringing to man's thought, that creation is a continuous,

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and so far as we can see, an endless process. The old thought of creation used to be, that it was a thing of limited and fixed time. In six definite days God made the heavens and the earth and then stopped.

When science showed that six days was too short a time for so vast an achievement, the length of time was extended: The six literal days were interpreted as six periods; but still they were regarded as fixed and definite.

But at last we are beginning to learn to be very modest in making assertions as to the when of beginning or of ending.

Under the tuition of science we are finding out that God's method of creation has been one, not of sudden fiats or abrupt changes, but of slow, gradual, orderly processes.

We can put our finger on no point of time and say, Creation began there, or ended there. Astronomy reveals to us the fact that the creation of the heavens has been going on so long that we have no language to express it or power of thought to conceive it. Nor is the work ended yet. Worlds are plainly growing in the sky now. There are nebulae condensing into suns. There are planets forming. Astronomers find suns and worlds far out in space in all stages of development: so that creation is clearly something that is proceeding in the heavens all the while.

So, too, is the work of creation proceeding all the while on the earth. Do any of us say: Oh that we might have lived in the morning of the world, and seen the work of creation going forward. We are living in

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the morning of the world, and if we will open our eyes we may see the process of creation going forward.

Probably, indeed, creation is going on more rapidly now in certain important respects than ever before; because in the great plan of things, man by his intelligence becomes a co-worker with Nature, that is, with God, in hastening it forward.

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To illustrate what I mean: The whole group of domesticated animals, yielding to man eggs, milk, wool, and service, were how poor things when first they came under Man's hand, compared with what he — working with God — has made them! In a million years Nature unaided by man brings into existence a sheep. In a few generations man, taking the sheep under his charge, and supplementing the agencies of natural selection and so on, which Nature had employed, with his own directing intelligence, transforms that original sheep into an animal so different and so far superior as scarcely to be recognizable as the same. From one breed of dogs man has produced the greyhound, the bulldog, the setter, the terrier, the pointer, the St. Bernard, the lap dog, and many more.

All double flowers, without exception, are man's work; I mean man's working with God. Pluck a wild rose from a thicket, and then go and compare it with one of the splendid roses of our gardens, and you will see how much man has helped Nature in the creation of beautiful flowers.

Man's hand, as working with God in the on-going

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creation of to-day, is seen in a striking manner in many fruits. From how coarse natural products have been developed by man's care and skill our luscious peaches, pears, plums and apples! When Dubufe's celebrated painting of "Adam and Eve," was on exhibition in New York some years ago, an unlettered man, but very eminent as a fruit grower, was taken to see it, and was asked for his opinion. "Well, I think no great things of the painter," was the reply. "Didn't you notice, Eve's tempting Adam with a pippin of a variety that wasn't known till about twenty years ago?"

This illustrates my thought: New varieties of fruit are coming into existence all the while, under man's intelligent labor.

The wild tomato, which Nature created, was almost a worthless thing. But the tomato of our modern garden, which Nature and man together have created, is justly accounted one of the luxuries of food that have become necessities.

The potato as Nature put it in man's hand was far less valuable than the potato which he has helped Nature produce.

Even the wheat which to-day we prize more highly perhaps than any other edible, was — in its natural state, as it is found still growing in upper Egypt — almost worthless — utterly unfit for making bread. For centuries on centuries was man compelled to work together with Nature, that is with the Power and Wisdom at the heart of Nature, to evolve, to develop, to create our wheat out of its well-nigh worthless progenitor.

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But it is not alone man the agriculturist, that becomes a helper in the ever on-going work of creation in the world. Man the inventor, man the discoverer, man the builder, man the engineer, man the toiler in every department of labor, works with God — to conquer seas, to dry up swamps, to tunnel mountains, to make deserts fertile, and in a thousand ways to change the useless on earth into the useful, and the ugly into the beautiful.

Think what a stupendous creative work was done by the Russian government when it drained the vast Pinsk marsh in the Southwest of Russia, and thus turned millions of acres of worthless swamp into homes for men. Our own government is undertaking a work even greater in draining the Everglades of Florida.

In Egypt, in India, and in many parts of the United States, as in California, Utah, Colorado, and Arizona, and elsewhere, areas of desert have been converted into paradises of fertility and fruitfulness by irrigation. That is creative work on a great scale.

Agassiz, the great scientist, used to urge that there is a vast work yet to be done by men in reclaiming and regenerating the sea — destroying the sharks and other destructive and worthless forms of life there, and stocking its waters with food-yielding fish, and other life useful to man, thus making it yield ten times more food for the human race than it now does. What a creative work would that be! And we are already beginning it.

\* \* \* \*

Nor does man's creative power stop with material things. Indeed the work of creation is now going on

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perhaps most rapidly of all, not in the world of physical nature, but in the higher realm of the intellectual, the social, the political, the moral, the spiritual. Intelligence is spreading on the earth with a speed never known before. This is creative work — creative of a higher thought-world for man. Each century lifts man to a little higher condition socially. This is nobly creative work.

Better political ideas are making their way in the world. The agitations that disturb the industrial world — strikes, labor leagues, co-operative movements, wars between capital and labor, mean ultimate betterment of human conditions; in the end more just relations between the rich and the poor.

Science was never making such headway as now. Education is becoming more universal. Knowledge is spreading. Art and beauty in every form are becoming larger factors in human life. Law is growing more far-reaching and even-handed. Within the past hundred years such barbarities as slavery, piracy, and duelling have largely disappeared from the world. There is a slow but steady rising in many lands against intemperance. In America the results already achieved are remarkable.

Never before in the history of Christendom was so much done as now to banish disease and to relieve human suffering in its many forms; nor were ever so many agencies at work as at the present time to dry up the streams of vice and evil, that flow up and down the earth.

Now all these things are creative work — creative in

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the realm which is higher and more important than the material. They are all operating to build a new and higher humanity. They are all working together with God to create that "new earth wherein shall dwell peace and righteousness," of which poets and prophets have so long dreamed and prophesied.

Yes, God is working now on the earth, not with unconscious atoms merely (as of old), not with blind material forces only (as before man's advent upon the scene), but now also with higher allies — with the conscious, intelligent co-operation of spirits akin to himself, learning more and more how to use the materials and forces of nature to carry on God's creative work, both in its lower and its higher forms.

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This thought, that man's right work in the world is that of conscious and willing co-operation with God, throws light upon some otherwise dark problems that we all have to face. For example (to take up again a thought which has been considered under another aspect in some preceding pages) man finds himself confronted all the while with the stern enigma of the inexorableness and seeming cruelty of Nature.

As we look out over the operations of Nature, with many signs of benevolence, we seem also to see malevolence, or at least heartlessness. Take up a single newspaper, and we find a whole chapter of calamities — earthquakes, railway and steamboat disasters, mine explosions, burned buildings, scourges of contagious diseases, accidents of all kinds — in which old and

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young, rich and poor, good and bad alike suffer. What does it mean? At first sight it certainly seems as if there can be no Providence — nothing in Nature higher than blind unfeeling force or fate.

But if we stop thoughtfully to consider, we discover that though at best the matter remains dark enough, yet it is by no means so dark as may at first sight appear. Two or three different considerations throw light upon it; among them this thought of a man a co-worker with God.

As a co-worker with God he, man, becomes himself a Providence, a human providence, and yet no less a divine providence for being human. Man becomes a divine providence or agency of God to introduce into the world that heart side, that love and pity and care side, which physical nature standing alone, without man, its complement, lacks — lacks of course because it is merely nature's physical or material side.

God works ever through agencies. Does he work less through man, the highest of his creatures, than through the lower? Why then should not man be God's agency on earth to mitigate and lessen calamities, and turn them to good use; to make them stepping stones in human progress, and finally by degrees to conquer and prevent them? Man has been in all his history exactly that. Illustrations are numberless.

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For example: that calamity which falls periodically upon savages, *viz.*, scarcity of food, the divine providence of human intelligence and forethought tends to avert as

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man rises in civilization. The calamity of suffering from cold and exposure and attacks of wild animals, so dreadful in early ages of the world, the divine providence of man's intelligence eventually overcomes.

A few centuries ago a calamity of a most dreadful kind, known in history as the plague, or black death, fell periodically upon Christendom. If anything in the annals of the past seems awful, pitiless, a sign that heaven has no mercy, and that there is no Providence above us, it is this. And yet already the divine providence of human intelligence has entirely removed it from Europe, as sometime it will remove it from India. Europe now no more fears the plague which slew its tens of millions of her population in the 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th centuries after Christ, than she fears the wild beasts which were her scourge in the 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries before Christ.

Cholera, yellow fever, and small pox, which have been such dreaded foes to the human race, we are learning to fear less and less, because we are finding out how to guard against them. Railway disasters grow relatively fewer, (I mean fewer considering the number of passengers transported), with the improved railway beds, and improved engines, cars, and brakes, and improved signal and telegraphic arrangements and systems of management, which the intelligence of man is all the while devising.

Even as regards calamities which come from the elements, or from the giant forces of nature, the same is true. Franklin's invention of the lightning rod has rendered the dreaded thunder bolt comparatively

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harmless. By the system of storm signals adopted now by most nations, and by wireless telegraphy, ocean storms are robbed of a great part of their power for evil. Even earthquakes are certain to become far less destructive of life in the future, as men learn to erect buildings better able to withstand the strain of their shocks.

Thus in all these directions we see how large and wonderful a thing is this human providence, and in how many ways it supplements and makes good any seeming lack there may be in the Divine Providence.

And then, as we stop, and look deeper we see that this human providence is in fact only a fragment of something larger than itself — only the human side of an all-embracing Providence which necessarily includes man's work as well as the work of physical nature. It is man co-working with God in the carrying forward of his great plans of progress and good in the world; in other words it is God working through, not now the lower agencies of material forces alone, but also through the higher agencies of rational, intelligent, purposeful, self-determining human beings, the highest of his creatures, the noblest of his agencies on the earth.

Thus it is that this thought of man as a co-worker with God comes to us to bring light upon that problem which forever confronts all men who seriously think: "Is the Universe beneficent? or is it heartless and purposeless? Is there, or is there not, a Providence, an infinitely wise Providence that can be trusted, over the world and over man's life, directing all things to ultimate ends of good?"

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As we look around us we see of a certainty that there is at least a splendid, far-reaching human providence in the world. Where did it come from? From Nature? Then Nature is kind. From the Law of Things? Then the Law of Things is kind. From God? Then God is kind, and has not deserted his world or man, even in the day which to us seems darkest.

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In still another way is this thought of God and man working together, practically helpful.

I think there is hardly anything that lends such dignity to human effort, and so strengthens men to duty, as the thought that in all right and noble work we do, we work with God. There is something in the very consciousness that one is associated with Strength that tends to make one strong.

In the old times when Rome was in her glory it was thought to be a great thing to be a Roman citizen. He who could say, "I am a citizen of the Roman Empire," even if he were the humblest of all Romans, yet felt somehow that he shared in the might and glory of the power throned on the Tiber. It has been a common experience for soldiers of a great captain like Hannibal or Napoleon to come to feel that their leader was invincible. And such leaders have always encouraged the belief; because they knew well that the army that believed itself to be fighting under a general who could not be defeated was by that very belief made vastly more courageous and effective.

Why was Jesus so calm and brave, in the face of oppo-

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sition, obloquy, violence and death? Why was Paul so earnest and dauntless through all the years of his trying and dangerous work — work persevered in through “perils of water, through perils of robbers, through perils by his own countrymen, through perils by the heathen, through perils in the city, through perils in the wilderness, through weariness and painfulness, through hunger and thirst, through cold and nakedness?” Why was John Brown willing to face singlehanded six millions of slaveholders, backed by the whole power of the United States government; and give his life an offering beforehand for the freedom of the slaves?

What gave Luther courage to stand up, one poor monk, against the whole ecclesiastical power of the Christian world?

Why is it that all the ages of the past shine resplendent with faithful and self-sacrificing toilers, noble reformers, martyrs, heroes?

The explanation that goes farther than any other is, these men believed that God was with them. Feeling that they were working with God — feeling that in all they did and endured and suffered, they were yet in alliance with the Eternal Justice, the Eternal Truth, the Eternal Right, the Eternal Power over them and over all things, why should they not be calm and undaunted at what men could say or do, self-forgetting, willing to toil, sacrifice and if need be die, for duty’s sake? In the very nature of things it is impossible for thought to be more inspiring than this. And whenever in all the history of the world men have deeply felt its truth it has shown its power to transform weakness into

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strength, cowardice into courage, selfishness into the most beautiful self-sacrifice, the most humble and common-place lives into lives essentially noble.

And what it has achieved in the past it is able to achieve in the present; what it has done for others it waits to do for us.

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Does the work which falls to the lot of any of us, seem drudgery — which we chafe and fret under, and long to get away from? It would not be so if we could realize that humble or petty though it may appear, it is yet God's work, put into our hands to do for him and with him.

To God nothing is small. He rounds a dewdrop as perfectly as a world. He polishes the spine of a nettle with as much care as he paints the crimson and gold of an evening sky. Thus if God in his work counts nothing trivial, why should we in ours?

In all moral and religious endeavors it is for us to think of ourselves as especially workers with God.

What is a true Christian Church? It is an institution founded on purpose to enable men to become workers with God in the most important matters that we can know anything about in this world; — working together with him to build up our own lives into greater purity and worth; to build up our children into increased truth and reverence; to build up the community into sounder moral integrity; to build up humanity into greater Christ-likeness; to build up the nation into a Commonwealth of Man; to build up the earth into a Kingdom of

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Heaven wherein shall dwell righteousness and love and peace.

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Workers together with God! — How inspiring and glorious is such a faith! What wonder at its power! How could it do otherwise than make all of the children of men who have really heard its voice, glad, earnest, brave, self-forgetting, consecrated to all noble service of God and humanity?

Is there over us all, an Infinite Power, who alike in storm, and sunshine, in light and darkness, where we can see and where we cannot see, is working out great and eternal purposes of good? And may we make our small lives, lives of working together with him — supplementing our weakness with strength? Even so; just as the ivy, weakest of plants, grows strong and glorious by laying hold of the great tower by its side, by whose strength it lifts itself into the sunlight, so may we, frail children of earth, lay hold of the hand of Infinite Power above us, and by our alliance with him lift ourselves up into strength, into courage, into joy and peace, into patience, into certainty of success, into hope shining with a light that is more than of earth.





